

# **A Psychologist at Work**

*by E. Graham Howe*

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## Foreword

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There are few more necessary and less rewarding tasks than that of making a branch of specialized knowledge available to a wider public. To the profession—sole proprietors till now of what is being made available—it appears that their mysteries are being shamelessly profaned; and at the time the public will show little gratitude, for it is never aware of wanting knowledge it has not yet got. Man's development demands, however, a steady breaking-down of specialized learning into communicable form, and its handing-on by all who are willing and have the power to undertake a somewhat ambiguous task—that of the communicator or middle-man. Writers, teachers, journalists in every generation are thus faced with a double duty, to pass on whatever is newly revealed or discovered in their own day, and to restate the ancient truths in terms which strike home to the average man and woman.

When, as editor of *Picture Post*, I decided to publish a series of articles giving some kind of picture of how present-day psychology goes about its work, I thought of Dr. Graham Howe primarily because, of the small band of practising psychiatrists who write in English, his writings appear to me the most vivid and pregnant. They have the further advantage that I can, almost always, see clearly what they are saying; and it seems to me an essential part

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of an editor's duty—not generally observed—to act as filter to his public's drink, straining off whatever he cannot comprehend himself; and this he does, not because he believes his own intelligence to be all-inclusive, but precisely because he knows that it is not. What he rejects, in so far as he does his work soundly, may have been precious but would not be understood.

Secondly, the writings of Graham Howe combine, to an exceptional degree, a picture of the workings of modern psychology with a restatement of traditional wisdom. To put it inversely, he is one of the few practising psychologists who appreciate how immensely wide is the field of human experience, and how comparatively small a corner can be tilled by the instrument of psychiatry alone.

The analytical method—like the dialectical method employed by Socrates—is a superb (is it too much to say 'infallible'?) technique for arriving at the truth, so far as it is within the comprehension of the person analysed or questioned, and provided the instrument is handled with absolute sureness and discretion. It can show a man where he is dishonest or confused, and partly why, so enabling him over a period of time to reach a more harmonious or courageous attitude within the limits his personality allows. But it cannot to any notable degree extend these limits. Nor can the practitioner himself employ the instrument beyond the point he has reached in his own development.

A man may see devils where there are only mantelpiece ornaments, his friends in the office, or his wife. Analysis may teach him that the ornaments are not devils at all, that his wife and friends are only devils in part—and largely as the result of his own insistence they should be so—but it cannot teach him to see all heaven in a grain of sand or Niagara in a teaspoon. It cannot make a house-painter

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into an artist, or a churchwarden into a St. Francis—though it might conceivably turn a tormented artist into a contented house-painter.

Analysis is not, therefore, as some analysts appear to argue and humanity would be only too happy to believe, 'the answer' to the ills and shortcomings of man. To appreciate this entirely, as Howe does, is at the same time an affirmation, a resounding claim for the technique, and an abnegation. It is accompanied in his writings by a quality that is both rare and touching, a profound respect for his raw material, the human mind and spirit—not for its manifestations in vanity and folly, but for the underlying spirit itself. This produces in him a sharp distrust of all ready-made techniques for coping with man's frailties, all drastic methods of slashing, burning, amputating or electric-shocking our diseases, without consideration of their value and meaning to the sufferer, or of what our condition will be when this first devil has been exorcized.

The fresh knowledge, then, which Howe sets out to make available in his books and articles is knowledge of modern psychological method and its power, limited in width but infinite in depth, for solving certain kinds of human problems. But more important, I think, is the gift he shows for revitalizing knowledge which is too familiar. The light is the same which has glimmered darkly in a million lecture-rooms, glanced fitfully from a million pulpits, been both revealed and obscured by a million sages and gurus to their pupils—but it is now our own, set out in terms of our daily life.

What, infinitely compressed, is the message which Howe hands on to the readers of books and magazines in the middle of the twentieth century?

Every problem exists on every level. It is always the same

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problem, though it is presented in quite different forms. On the political level, the problem which devours men's minds to-day is the urgency of reconciling and harmonizing East and West. It does not appear to mankind in this form at all. It appears as the necessity for compelling the other half of mankind to think as we do—the West to westernize the East and the East to orientalize the West. Yet one has only to imagine the Third World War as over—victoriously concluded in accord with the wishes of either side—to realize that this not merely *ought* not to be the answer. It quite simply cannot be. Too much of the spirit of man is left out of a world finally organized to suit Western individualism or Eastern totalitarianism as we know them.

A balance has, therefore, to be reached. There may be a temporary balance in which the opposing ideas, with the great nations in which they are embodied, control the world's opposing halves. But the final balance must be one in which the ideas of both hemispheres are freely active throughout the whole—with man exercising his right of choice between them, according to his natural cast of mind and the nature of his local differences.

To the political problem of reconciling East and West there exists a spiritual counterpart. The great teaching of the West is respect for the separate personality and the sanctity of individual human life. This teaching, if it is not to result in the exploitation of man by man ('the glory of free enterprise') and in softness in face of opposition ('get the boys all home for Christmas'), requires to be balanced by another. The lesson of the East—and here it is not Russia but China or India which embodies the Eastern viewpoint—is the littleness of individual human life as such, the complete unimportance of mortal happiness compared to spiritual progress, coupled with a profound esteem for death. Death, that is, is seen not as extinction; not as some-

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thing to be avoided at all costs; not even as the inevitable to be grimly faced; but as the opening of a door, a reshuffling of our pack, a new turn of the wheel.

Sleep is a little death; but it is the source of all refreshment, a nightly knitting-up of ravelled sleeves. How much deeper the refreshment we shall draw, how much greater the possibilities which may unfold, when we wake up once more in death? Spiritually, each teaching needs the other. But—here is the razor's edge—it is the West which desperately needs to learn patient acceptance from the East, and the East which must come to value that concern for each separate human creature which underlies the West's pushful enterprise and bustling humanitarianism.

'There is nothing wrong with religions', Howe writes in his book *War Dance*, 'except the way in which they are manifested in theology and carried out in practice by mankind. The error is with man and it is due to his dislike of the special and temporal limits of the nature of his incarnation. His spirit seems to have exceeded the discipline of Time, and his untimely efforts have become moralized beneath a façade of contented self-righteousness.' The religions of East and West have misunderstood the double nature of time in a different way. By over-emphasizing the importance of 'here and now', by making our single life the sole heroic conflict, with crowns of glory or eternal fire as its reward or punishment, Western religion has produced a picture of spiritual reality which no thinking person can accept. By discounting the life in time, placidly accepting a mass of quite evitable human suffering and injustice, the Eastern religions have increasingly separated themselves off from the only world in which spiritual development can actually take place. In doing so they have left the way wide open for their own direct opposite—a creed which asserts that there is nothing whatever but the 'here and now'.

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'Workers of the world unite: you have nothing to lose but your chains'. Neither God, nor spirit, nor hope of true development. So, lose your chains—and then you will have, simply, nothing. Nothing, that is, but the whole external world in resentful, misunderstood, subjection.

Scientifically, also, the East-West struggle has its parallel—that is in the world of thinking. And here the use Howe makes in his books of the phrases 'three-dimensional' and 'four-dimensional' sets out eternal thoughts in language to-day's newspaper reader can accept.

'Three-dimensional thinking' is that which we, the untaught, apply to our everyday life as a matter of course. It is a cutting across the time-track of experience at an arbitrary point called 'now', and a labelling of what happens to us at this point as 'good' or 'bad' without reference to what comes before or after. It is 'good' to get money, enjoy love, be free from pain. But how if the money handles us, instead of our handling it? If the love was an illusion, and the pain needed for our own development—is it still good to have had the one and escaped the other? Three-dimensional thinking is a ceaseless passing judgement in terms of the immediate present, or the apparent immediate present. Four-dimensional thinking includes time in its judgement, looking before and after, looking in fact right over the edge in each direction and calling no man happy till he's born again. It is only in four-dimensional thinking that we can have any true picture even of the present, yet our lives are entirely dominated by the snap judgements of three-dimensional thinking—driving us on to secure more of the 'good' or pleasant, and exclude all of the 'bad' or painful, without regard to ultimate values which are classed as 'fanciful', 'nebulous', 'unscientific'. Science, lord of three-dimensioned thought, is proud to ask no final questions.



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Never 'what is the bomb for?' But always 'can we make it bigger?'

There are, of course, individual scientists who ask 'what is the bomb for?' Indeed scientists are tending to ask that question more courageously and insistently than other men. But as yet they ask it only 'on the side', off the record, in their spare time as men and fathers. They have not succeeded in incorporating the fundamental question 'what is the bomb for?' within their thinking about bombs. That would be, they still consider, 'unscientific'.

To the conception of three- and four-dimensional thinking there is in art a fascinating parallel. Four-dimensional thinking—which is implied in all religion and in most philosophy—is presented to us in the work of primitive painters who tell the whole of a saint's life-story on a single canvas; his birth, his journey into the wilderness, his meeting with strangers, the attack by lions, his crucifixion and enthronement in the skies. Three-dimensional thinking is externalized for us by the camera, which slices its cross-sections out of time and space (one-fiftieth of a second at 12.15 p.m. on the afternoon of 30th November 1950, outside the 'Dog and Duck' in Bermondsey); presenting an impression without parentage and with no descendants.

On the emotional level, too, the East-West struggle is fought out, with 'West' as the creed of action for its own sake; calling always for more having, doing, being; insisting that we take destiny in our own hands and bend existence to our will. To the Western viewpoint it is always 'up to us'. We must be constantly assuming responsibility, 'coping', not letting matters 'get out of control'—and so we spread ourselves thinner and thinner over the surface of life, forming committees, organizing societies, passing resolutions, and taking shows of hands. Meantime, for down

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below, the flow of life rolls on, and we are appalled, when we have time to notice, that there were never so many committees for preservation—and so much destruction: never so many organizations for preventing cruelty—and so much ferocious infliction of suffering: never so widespread a concern for peace—manifested beneath such a boundless unlifting menace of war.

But is it not possible, Howe suggests, that in trying to organize life so much we entirely mistake its nature? Hasn't life itself a power and purpose of its own? Wouldn't it be wiser to try and understand what life is trying to teach us, personally and as a whole, before we exhaust ourselves in trying to regulate its flow? There must be *some* reason why all our 'progress' only produces vaster danger and increasing tension. *Something* must have gone wrong. Can the answer really be more of the same kind of progress, when what we have had already produces the effects we see? Isn't it possible that what we want is less? *Less* struggle, *less* speed, *less* mechanical perfection? . . .

True, if we fall behind in our preparations to fight and kill, we run the risk of suffering and death. But hasn't someone got to run that risk, and aren't we running it in any case? Perhaps if we all accepted the idea of losing life, security and wealth, we might find we had saved it—or saved something else better worth having.

And here we are back at politics again. For when Western activity can only perfect destruction, and Eastern submission is shown in absorbing endless misery—isn't it possible that the two attitudes should be combined? Supposing our ingenuity built dams and levees to prevent the floods, while their bland patience tilled the newly-fertile soil? Difficult to organize? Of course: so will our own survival be when the atomic phallus assaults the English sky.

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To the struggle on all its levels there is finally the sexual parallel—or is it the root from which all other manifestations spread? For it is the nature of man to project his inner struggles outward and to see in the world (so finally producing in the world) a reflection of his own hidden drama. ‘We cannot plan that outer world to make it any better than it is, because its origin is present deep within ourselves. We make it as it is by being as we are.’

And if the outside world shows a predominance of violence over rest, of activity over calm acceptance, of explosion over natural growth, it is—Howe argues—because in our relations with one another, and above all deep within ourselves, we have exalted the male principle unduly at the expense of the female. ‘There has been no doubt in the minds of mankind that the female, being less visibly efficient, was inferior to the male. . . . Selectivity in any form, or applied to any subject, is always trying to raise one aspect of the duality at the expense of the other, and it is doubly unfortunate that this misunderstanding should be applied to women. They share the indignity, however, with the whole company of dragons and darkness, water and the spirit, intuition, sleep and death, besides such apparently unimportant “negatives” as the unseen, space and ignorance.’

Or again: ‘*It is the woman who suffers*: the woman in us all, the true creative urge, the source of individual life. She has no time or chance to grow. . . . The male half of “mind” and “consciousness” is overdone, without, however, having its proper relationship with the female half of “heart”, feeling, and the deeper unconscious drives. We thus become engrossed in a greedy and quarrelsome jitter of unnecessary but highly moralized activities, without knowing right from wrong, or being able to distinguish what we really need from what is pure excess. We have not sufficient sense of right relationship with our fellow men (or women),

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because we have not this right relationship within our dual selves.'

The short sketch I have tried to give of what is at any rate one of the main strands of Howe's thought will, I believe, be useful to those who read the following articles. The articles themselves vary, as all articles must. At its best the author's writing has a simplicity and directness allied to that of the great works which have been his inspiration.

'The truth we know is very dangerous to us unless we live by it.' 'All true change is an emanation of growth through fertilization by love.' 'In the end we are always possessed by any power we use possessively.'

At times, I feel, the author makes too many concessions to his readers and, in coming down to their level, falls a little below what they could reach. There are convolutions and repetitions, both of wording and arrangement.

On one subject—his treatment of the politician—he is not entirely just. In the realm of paradox both sides of every argument are true, but it is the task of the politician to translate thought into action and make a decided choice between alternatives. He may recognize that on the one hand: 'Relationship within a community would be less aggressive, where all could be assured of the right at least to the necessities of life.' And on the other he will appreciate that 'the Nannie-state' may undermine initiative and make us soft—but he has to come down on one side or the other because his job must be done in the world of space and time.

These, however, are trifles, detracting little from the main achievement. A sympathetic criticism would concentrate, I think, not on what has been done but on what remains to do—and the more one values Howe's work, the larger

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a single question looms. It is simply—‘Why stop here?’ For what Howe has done, in the books of his which have appeared already, is to clear away much of our accumulated mass of moralistic lumber. ‘It looks’, he writes, ‘as if, along with much other indigestible wealth, we have also to give up the very perverse dogma of conventional morality as well.’ It does indeed. The weapon used for clearing it away has been the psychological technique of taking the moral attitude apart to reveal the moralizer’s motives. In this Howe has been completely practical and rendered an invaluable service. At the same time he has indicated the deepest religious teaching—particularly the religious teaching of the East—as the source from which a true morality must grow. But he has not yet drawn the two halves of his thought together, presenting a working morality for daily life based on spiritual truth—with no concessions to the conventions he urges his readers to discard.

It would be an exhausting, as well as a highly dangerous and an unpopular, undertaking. There are very few—among religious leaders, writers, politicians or the rest of us—who seem even aware of its necessity.

TOM HOPKINSON



## **I: What's the use of psychology?**

*Is psychology here to stay? Is it to be trusted? Does it simply provide convenient excuses for delinquents? Or can it actually teach you and me to conduct our daily lives more sensibly, humanely, bravely? Can it affect our working — as well as our private — lives? Could its principles even extend to international affairs?*

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We were called 'trick-cyclists' during the war, which implies friendliness combined with a certain mistrust, as if we were not to be taken quite so seriously as we thought we should. It takes two faces to provoke such double, doubtful, feelings, and we were double-faced because our loyalty was divided then between our service to the Government and community at war on the one hand, and on the other to the one we saw as patient, suffering maladjustment to the demands of that authority. The soldier was right to doubt us. Indeed, as citizen and somewhat free again, he is still right to doubt us, if he expects us to be able to give him what he wants, for that we can very rarely do. We should never even seem to promise it, for the psychologist should never be regarded as a 'giver', as a means to the end of having what we want.

Psychology has something most important for the world to-day and for each one of us, but we must clearly under-

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stand what it can and what it cannot do. It can show you to yourselves, but it cannot give you what you want. It is an instrument of reflection, a mirror. It is not a mysterious cupboard from which hope, long disappointed, can at last be magically fulfilled. It is a point of view—detached, objective—by means of which you can see yourself not only as others see you, but more and more as you really are, have been and might become. The psychological approach is without prejudice and without an axe to grind. It is a ray of light impartially inspecting what we have desired to hide, or what we could not see because we were too closely bound within it. It is scientific in the sense that it is vision impartially directed into the unknown, but it is not scientific in the sense that it can ever hope to reduce the mass of its experience within a measurable formula. The field of psychological inquiry is too mysteriously vast for that, even if it is only—you.

The reason why psychology is one of the greater blessings of our time is not exactly because it has given us certain knowledge, for that may be dangerous in wrong, impatient or complacent hands. Its value is not so much in *what* it shows us: but in that it shows us *how to look*, how to evaluate experience—in fact, what sort of questions to ask, rather than the sort of answers to expect.

In house and government, in school and industry, the powers that be have very rarely had enough respect for time, growth, or for those subtle differences that make up the mysterious reality of 'personality'. They are all too much inclined to treat persons as things, pushing them around. They say, "You ought . . ." or "You must . . .", implying that, if we chose, we could be different now from what we are. (But whose fault is that we are what we are? And *how* does one change so instantly, without destroying life?) The powers that be always have some axe to grind



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for their convenience (peace in the home, ambition for success, more profits, or whatever it may be), and so they have no time for you and me in our exact reality. They are not sufficiently realistic, in fact, to be in touch with life, which has been abstracted, mechanized, and almost destroyed at their behest and for their convenience. And so the psychological approach must supply the real facts of time and growth, of you and me, which blind impatience casts aside.

The psychological approach is without prejudice. It never assumes anything. It simply wants to find out the deeper, fuller truth. Because it does not imply blame, it avoids much argument and extracts information as a vacuum-cleaner extracts dirt. It provides the questions to which you must find your own answers. It wants to know not only 'What happened?' but also 'Who you are?' because the same experience may mean something quite different to different people. Such questions as 'What did you feel then?' and 'What does this mean to you now?' with sometimes a study of your dreams, lead to discovery of deeper truth than moral exhortations or punishment can ever do.

The aim of the psychological approach is that we should learn from our mistakes and not be ashamed of them. Actually, of course, our past mistakes are always our best teachers and ought not to be so earnestly forgotten, punished or otherwise dismissed. They are our stepping-stones to better travelling. But where you go and what you choose to do about it, that is your own business. The psychologist is not concerned with helping you to avoid anything, nor with what ought to be done about what has happened. That will be for you to choose, later, when you know your answers to your own questions. But they must be your answers, not ours. And the choice, too, must be yours, not

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ours. We can perhaps release you (but only if you are willing) from those past bonds in which you have been so long tied. What you may wish to do about it after that is for you to discover, and then to choose and act in your own way, as best you can.

Because there is no interference or impatient desire for change about the psychological approach, it is the solvent of all those problems which have risen owing to interference and impatient desire for change. It puts in the time factor which has been left out, and makes growth possible again. It gives consideration where that patient attitude has been omitted. It gives time and opportunity for reflection, and puts the responsibility firmly back on the shoulders where it belongs—which are yours and mine—instead of on the circumstance or authority which we have in the past blindly blamed, and obeyed or refused to obey. It shows us the pattern, and may even solve the problem by showing us clearly what it is, which is not what we thought it was. And time and time again, this viewpoint of detached persistent study of the past shows us that our present troubles are due—not to themselves, nor even to some past difficulty by which we were assailed—but to our unconscious anxiety to do something about it, to change it or get rid of it somehow, or to escape from it altogether.

The instinct to escape makes a 'blind swipe' at problems which cannot be so easily or suddenly swept away. In consequence, we destroy ourselves, even when we thus blindly try to be our own saviours. Our unsolved problem of to-day is only yesterday's hashed-up again. Patterns repeat themselves like gramophone records that go on playing round and round: and we are blind until we are shown the point at which we dodged the real issue, the meaning of the situation by which we were confronted perhaps even in our

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infancy. Now we get our second chance to experience fully what we avoided then. For the crucial fact is that the fate which has always so desperately dogged our footsteps is our own, for full experience, with understanding, now.

The psychological approach may be found to be of use even in the most trying situations of matrimonial discussion. When she says "You fool, you lazy clot, you faithless hound, this is the end!" the wretched husband may still find that his very defencelessness takes the wind out of her sails, and that he is left with the best of the argument, if he will but ask the simple and straightforward question—"Why?"

The psychological viewpoint teaches us that we cannot always have our own way, and that we shall never be given so simply all we want: that our present troubles are due to the fact that we have always been too obstinately wilful in our attitude towards disappointment in the past. We find that troubles and difficulties are automatically resolved when they have been accepted. Experience, like food, can be digested—even if it is a bit tough—by a willing stomach. But when it is rejected, our indigestion remains within us as our added problem.

The searchlight of psychology has worked its wonders in many other fields besides the morbid hinterland of personal behaviour problems. Indeed, there is no direction where it cannot be applied with advantage. It is only extended common sense, and is being used nowadays with great success to solve the problems of 'bottle-necks' in industry, which are always found to have a very human angle. But in our study of the fields of experience in education and delinquency, history and mythology, religion and art, we discover that there always is a secret story, a deeper meaning mysteriously concealed, and that things are rarely what they seem to be at first. There is more in life than

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meets the eye, and by neglecting deeper levels of reality while we attempt to effect improvement by force upon the surface of events, we create a greater sickness, not only in society, but also in ourselves.

Change, if it be true and not a mere façade, is realized in time through growth, as we experience our personal problems of relationship. Change for the better does not come from interference, whether the impatient tyranny of power be benevolent or otherwise. With better recognition of these facts of time and growth, we may hope that the psychological viewpoint may one day penetrate even into the jungle of international politics.

Having illuminated so much of meaning, psychology has, of course, sometimes failed to recognize its own limitations. It is only an instrument of illumination, a searchlight in the dark, and it should give us nothing more, for that is enough. It should not give knowledge or power, nor can it answer the first, dark, deepest questions of the 'Why' of life, nor of its 'Whence' and 'Whither'. Our moral philosophy of life must be our own, and psychology cannot supply one for us, though it can do much to destroy the one we have by picking holes in it. Our knowledge must be gained from our own experience, and a psychological authority is as bad as any other, if we assume it to our own advantage. It is always our responsibility how we use or misuse the power we have, and the searchlight of psychology may become a veritable blunderbuss in clumsy or unscrupulous hands.

To common sense, the limitations of psychology should be obvious. How can such an instrument of approach ever hope to understand the mystery of love? It can illuminate our behaviour and show us most of our foolishness, though little of our glory. In a mean attempt to disparage deeper values in order to 'understand' them, it can reduce life to

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almost nothing by stating that *this* is only *that*, or love is only sex. But in doing so, it is only showing us that it is not yet sure of itself. It is a common habit with all adolescents (and in such knowledge we are still very young), to overstate their case and underestimate their difficulties.

Within each one of us, and all around, there is a realm of experience beyond psychology, in regard to which this instrument fails. Our viewpoint still persists, but common sense should warn us that there is much beyond our view. No one can see all, and indeed all will see differently, being the unique and separate persons that we are. But the fact that our quest must be unending is no reason why, when once begun, it should not be courageously continued by each one of us within the special field of our experience.

In every walk of life, opinions must differ. Yes, but what then? Should we force the other to agree that we are right? But if persons in themselves, their ages, and their experiences are indeed all so different, why should we not agree to differ? The psychological viewpoint has the courage to approach all problems without prejudice and undefended. It combines good manners, realism, unlimited patience and a spirit of inquiry, with no other axe to grind than that life should be worth more to each and all of us. As a way of life, it can never reach its goal. It must remain in touch with the stream, part of the process. There is no chance of 'sitting pretty' on the bank for long, because we are all in the stream together.

There are many things about which you and I will always differ. But could we not perhaps share the psychological viewpoint with advantage?

## 2: You ought to be ashamed —

*Is there one of us who can't remember that cry echoing in his—or her—ears? With some parents, school-teachers, authorities, it's their favourite sentence. Ought we to be ashamed? Or is it they who should? Don't we rather need a proper pride?*

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Shame is a shocking thing. It is a killer of the growing force of young emerging life. It freezes as it blights the opening bud of personality, and sends the vital spark cringing back into itself, its forward movement fixed, perhaps for ever, in a backward mood. Surely, to cause a child to feel ashamed is a sin, a sin against the deepest values of life itself, if that word sin means anything at all. But does it? How can it mean anything to us, if we regard the shame-faced child as the little sinner?

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself!” How often have we not heard this forceful appeal to the destructive power of shame applied, usually in a public place, to some child who is, perhaps, only experimenting uncertainly with moral values or trying out his still unstable personality by being a little different from others? The experience of shame is characteristically about something private and personal to ourselves, in regard to which we are publicly outraged in front of others. In effect, it is not less than an

*You ought to be ashamed—*

act of rape on childhood's unguarded instrument of sensitivity. But listen in the park or train, at home, or at school, how often the little offender is thus publicly assaulted: "You ought to be ashamed!"

Remember the child's intolerable sensitivity, his actual impotence in the face of this uncontrollable power. (Remember your own, if you can remember.) No wonder he prefers to join the big battalions, and becomes, as soon as and in any way he can, the Big Noise himself. (The damage is at least as bad if not worse if it happens to a girl, because toleration of her weakness and a strong build-up of her self-confidence in spite of it are even more important for her than for the more naturally aggressive male.)

"You ought to be ashamed!" No, *never!*

This is a true story. Charles's father was a Methodist minister, and as such seemed to be unusually informed as to God's moral intentions. Sex was sin, unspeakable, and Hell-fire burnt with real flames for those who offended his simple set of rules. His mother was a timid type, well under Father's thumb. So Charles learnt nothing of the facts of life, except from the whispers which he overheard at school. He was a sensitive, affectionate child, with an inquiring mind which eventually led him to a career of scientific research. He was lonely, and he was poor because his father did not believe in pocket money. By the age of thirteen, therefore, he had on several occasions stolen small sums of money from his father's trouser-pocket, but with a heavy load of guilt. On one occasion, being wealthier by a stolen shilling, he went to a cinema, where he sat next to some little girls who were giggling. He slid out an inquiring hand in the dark and touched a secret and mysterious knee. The giggling stopped and the girl slipped away. Feeling something was wrong, he hid under the seat, from

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under which he was soon unceremoniously pulled by the cinema manager. In the office two plain-clothes detectives were waiting, because apparently there had been complaints before and a trap had been set to catch the culprit. Into this Charles had unwittingly fallen. He was taken to his home by the detectives, where his father said "God will never forgive you!" and his mother, "I shall never get over it!" ("You ought to be ashamed!") Subsequent events included appearance in a children's court, a public beating before his schoolfellows, and expulsion. He was ashamed: he was more than ashamed, for he had his first epileptic attack soon after. Amongst other effects, he developed a deep mistrust of, and resentment against, women—which was not unnatural.

He was kept in the dark, and his misfortunes happened in the dark. Then came the searing blaze of public scrutiny and shame. His father's Hell was very real for him, but his epilepsy shifted the burden of his intolerable shame, which was beyond his bearing.

To understand any word better, it is as well to set it alongside others to which it is related, so that they illuminate one another. I would like to put sin beside shame and guilt.

Sin is out of fashion nowadays, but shame and guilt most certainly are not. Yet sin is our common state inevitably, whether we like it or not, if it is true that life is a process of growth, of becoming more like that perfection which is ultimately possible, but from which we all must fall short in some degree, even to the end of our days. Neither father nor mother, preacher, teacher nor judge are perfect yet. Life is a very long journey, which we are all travelling, and no one has yet arrived. Saints, who have travelled further, are always most aware of sin, because they know the perfection which they may attain but have not yet.



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Therefore, in common sense, here and now, as a matter of fact, we are *all* sinners. But we do not want to be, because we don't like it. It does not feel comfortable. We prefer, instead, to prove another person (or nation) wrong. We 'pass the baby' on to someone else and say, "*You* ought to be ashamed". It eases our burden of intolerable guilt.

But guilt is not sin. It is what we feel about it, our attitude towards sin. We cannot rest, it seems, in that outcast state. Therefore, for most of us, guilt is a compulsive instant jump ahead, as if we not only ought to be what we are not, but must be, *now*. So guilt must always be saved from itself, either by instant pardon, total change, a saviour—or, more cheaply, by blaming someone else who, being weaker than we are, can never answer back.

Shame is guilt's unlovely twin and necessary counterpart. Where guilt jumps on to glory and tries (but how unsuccessfully!) to assume perfection, shame flies back to the beginning, escaping out of life. Guilt would steal the prize without ever having run the race of life; but shame gives it up as a bad job, not competing. Sinners, on the other hand, need show no anxious fuss about their sin, nor need they urge others to a betterness which they have not got themselves. We sinners know that life is a job of work, good times and bad. And surely, if we only make good use of it, there is plenty of time in which to grow our betterness?

People, and nations too, can be so very touchy. It is not exactly that we are too sensitive to another's touch, because in a way it is impossible to be too sensitive—if by that we mean awareness of another's truth and mood. But we are certainly too easily offended, as if the gun of our self-defence goes off with a bang at the slightest touch upon the trigger. Shame and guilt are unhealed sores that must be constantly concealed and protected in case our pain should

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be too great to bear. Better pass it quickly on to someone else whom we can hurt, but whom we need not fear because they are so much younger or weaker than ourselves. So the weaker ones, especially the children and the women, are the common scapegoats who ease us of the intolerable burden of our imaginary crimes. (But remember that some of us are quite capable of forgiving the one at the greater expense of the other. We may be very kind to children—who perhaps remind us of ourselves—and then take it out of women all the more, because we like to believe that our obvious consideration for children proves how kind we really are. The woman usually pays the greater price for this displacement of unconscious guilt.)

It is a pity that weakness should seem to all of us to be intolerable. It is a pity, because our actual weakness, like our actual sin, is true. But no, we *ought* to be strong and we *ought* to be good; which is not difficult, so long as there are others whom we can be sure are both weaker than ourselves and in the wrong.

That is not common sense, nor good manners, nor Christianity. But it is human nature, rough and ready in the raw. And it is more true for all of us in our daily lives than we are willing to recognize. We go on clamouring about our rights and wrongs, blaming others whose faults are no less obvious to us than ours are to them. Where all are sinners, it is never hard to find someone to blame.

Such falsely moralized behaviour is the cause of much needless unhappiness in our homes. But on the international level it becomes moralized madness. It is then called war.

If my claim is right, that you and I are neither very big, nor very good, nor very strong—in spite of our moral principles, political prejudices, and atom bombs—then, of course, what we all need is more encouragement and a

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better build-up for our proper pride. What we all need is more self-confidence, so that we may find in time the satisfaction which springs from successful self-expression.

By pride, however, I do not mean conceit or vanity, which imply a hollow and inflated state to conceal our frightful emptiness. Surely pride is a very right and noble word, and it implies a right and noble state to which we are all equally entitled. There are certain things that I am entitled to be proud of, but they have all been given me, and pride is false if it claims that I myself am owed the credit for these things.

First I may be proud that *I am*. This is a simple statement of value of which I may be justly proud. Then I may be proud of my parents, my firm, my school, or my country. (Again I did not make them. They were gifts to me.) So, too, my brains or good looks, if I have any, my physique, good health or aptitude at games or my special skill, are all qualities of which I may be justly proud as gifts for my good use. Such proper pride is very near humility.

But we are apt to make a serious mistake in our moral accountancy of life when we take credit to ourselves for what we have been given. Surely, having been given more (of which we may be justly proud), we owe more to the 'giver', which should be paid as best we can to others who have less. Therefore our gifts come on the *debit*, not on the credit, side of our accounts of life.

So much has been given me. Do I need more? Yes, certainly: I need more encouragement to use these gifts of mine with proper pride and full responsibility.

### **3: Should we pull ourselves together?**

*Is life really as simple as those in authority seem to make out? Is it just a matter of 'trying harder'—and then everything will come all right? Or are there other, wiser, ways of tackling the same problems?*

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Life is doubly difficult. In the complex situations which it sets before us, we are constantly up against it—and one another—in subtle, awkward ways. But we are difficult, too, within ourselves. We are not the plain and simple folk we may appear to be, you and I. We are layered in depth, back into our own childhood, and beyond into the darkness of forgotten history. The past dwells in us now and works in mysterious ways to rule our everyday behaviour. We seem to be conscious and aware, to know what we are doing and why. But actually our motives are many and complex. And we know very little about ourselves or why we behave in the particular way we do.

We all suffer to some extent from three main handicaps. The first is sheer ignorance. In the beginning, we are not unlike kittens. Although we are not born actually blind, we have everything to learn, and it is only when we look back later that we realize how much we learnt was wrong, and how much must be unlearnt if we are to come closer to the truth. The second is our initial weakness, which is

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opposed to the apparently unlimited authority of the powers that be, who are not always wise. And the third is that we are all endowed with instinctive patterns of behaviour, like chicks who peck up seed from the first moment they break out of their shell. But these habit-patterns, or 'defence-mechanisms' as they are called, were laid down in the nervous system many thousands of years ago, and are better adapted to solve the social problems of the jungle than to serve us well in 1951.

Some of us fare better and some worse, but considering how difficult life is, and how complex we are, we all do very well even to manage as we do. Some of us, more blessed by luck, skill and opportunity, get by. Some of us, who have the necessary tenacity of purpose, get to the top. But some of us, who are perhaps more sensitive, suffer from our 'nerves'. We are called 'neurotic', which commonly implies that what we suffer from is only imagination, that it is our own fault anyway, and that we could be quite different immediately if we only chose 'to pull ourselves together'. But change is not so easy. The roots of such disorder dig very deep indeed, not only into the earliest levels of our personal past, but into the childhood of mankind.

The word 'neurotic' is not only a term of abuse. It really means something. As an illness it is not entirely a misfortune. The victim *needs* the illness, as a man without a limb or with bad eyesight needs some mechanical aid with which to cope with life. But more than that, the word 'neurotic' implies a certain sensitivity, which is not entirely a disadvantage, even when it has gone wrong. Those who earn the label, rightly or wrongly, are the unsuccessful ones who have failed to come to terms with life, either in spite or because of their instinctive aids. ( But there are also many highly successful neurotics, parents or teachers, politicians, preachers or millionaires, who have so 'made good' their grip on

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things or people by their determined obstinacy or peculiar obsession that—being unshakable and unteachable—they do not suffer themselves, but make others fail. Thus one successful neurotic can make many unsuccessful ones, who take the blame.)

The characteristics of the neurotic attitude to life are chiefly these: an exaggerated dependence on others, which may be either people or things: self-centredness, which means that all other purpose is subsidiary to some personal advantage: and finding fault with others (sometimes themselves), who are always to blame if anything goes wrong. The neurotic is divided against himself, but must get his own back from those who make up the world in which he lives. Are not we all like that in some degree?

Reckrimination is our common fault, and we constantly blame others and ourselves for faults we cannot help. We are such complex personalities, even as children, that we cannot change to order, however hard we try, or others try us. Parents, teachers, preachers are all too apt to urge us to be other than we are, and it is their neurotic attitude to us which makes us become also neurotic in our turn, though probably less successfully. If we take the trouble to inquire and pay the attention it deserves to past experience, we find that there always is a story, and that effects cannot occur without special causes. The story of the girl who became her own grandmother (but unsuccessfully) will illustrate the point.

Miss X was a school-teacher, anxious, shy, and about forty years of age. She was always imagining the worst about the small children in her charge. They would fail in their exams, or fall out of trees and break their necks, or fall ill and die. She did not blame them, as others might. She blamed herself instead, because she found it easier.

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Her state of self-recrimination was perpetual. Meanwhile, she mothered (smothered?) her charges with incessant care, prepared to stop anything from happening if it might be dangerous. The more she tried to avoid all risk for them, the larger danger loomed on her horizon, and she found much for which to blame herself. The children called her 'Granny' and did not take her seriously, which added to her state of chronic discomfort and anxiety.

Her story? She had been the eldest of three children and the unwilling victim of too much responsibility too soon. She saw little of her father, who did not like his home and spent his time away from it. Her mother had given up the battle with life and taken to her bed, a chronic invalid. She was a very dismal person and incapable of showing affection, even if she felt it. Not only did the eldest child have to take her mother's place, looking after her younger brother and sister, but she said "I always felt I had to mother mother too". She bestowed on others the affection which she craved herself, but never could receive. In fact, she obeyed the old precept and 'did as she would be done by', becoming her own grandmother by mothering her mother, although she was motherless herself. This left a horrid gap, which she tried to close by putting the lid on her own feelings, preferring to have no wants herself at all, rather than experience the pain of disappointment. She was a most unselfish child, which persisted into her subsequent career, in which she continued to mother other people's children, whom she spoilt by giving to each and all of them what she had never had herself.

Her colleagues found her difficult. She always undertook too much, being willing to do everyone else's duty besides her own; but she was very touchy, imagining slights where no offence was meant, thus making others feel as awkward as she did herself. She always took the blame and was the

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scapegoat for all, because she always blamed herself. Once when she had got into trouble for what the head-mistress called her 'stupid interference', she said "That put the lid on it!" But, of course, she had done that upon herself long before, and such patterns of avoidance are inevitably repeated. Her only rest and comfort came when she was ill, which happened frequently. Yet—she could not enjoy even that, because she had to blame herself until she was about again.

The case that I have chosen is a very innocent one, but other victims of their past avoidances are not always so lacking in aggressiveness. They must get their own back from others—and they do. Husbands punish wives because of earlier mother trouble, and wives take it out of husbands because perhaps they resented a brother's preference. (He was a boy and had a better time. She was only a girl, but gets her own back now by bullying her husband.) There always is a story and there are always causes to explain these ill-effects. We either blame ourselves or others, wasting much time in useless recrimination, because we still live in our undigested and unpleasant past.

Should we blame all these neurotics, or not? Does it do them any good? No, I don't think so, for blame does not cure, where there is too much blame already. But doesn't it do us good to get our feelings off our chest? Yes, it *does*. Yet we should realize who benefits—for it never is the one we blame, whom we make worse again by blaming them.

Then does that mean that there is no such thing as true responsibility? Are we exonerated from all blame because of this blessed modern reference to the 'unconscious motive'? Did she really pinch the nylons from the store because she was unhappy as a child? Is to-day's behaviour



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only determined by what happened yesterday? Is there no free will at all?

We must each answer all these questions for ourselves. My own opinion is that we swing the pendulum too far when we go so swiftly from 'always' to 'never', from all to nothing. The answer hangs somewhere in the middle of the two extremes, where we can hesitate with 'sometimes, partly'. Judgment thus balanced can never be so swift. But to lose free will and all responsibility is to lose our heritage. The judge is right, I think, to disregard the too facile explanation of the psychologist.

What can we learn from the story of the girl who tried to become her own grandmother, in the long run. To do without works better than to enjoy another person's fun by giving them what we really want ourselves. Experience is to be suffered as it comes, and not to be dodged; because if we dodge, we shall be left with both the experience we have avoided, and all our dodges, too. It is better to keep on wanting, even if we do not get what we want. To kill desire is near to suicide, and patience is a real virtue. And finally I would add, *keep yourself out of your own light and never let yourself be mixed up with your goal.*

The school-mistress was always getting in her own light. What she wanted was to fill her childhood's aching void, to be approved and loved. She was not being unselfish, really, because this improvement within herself was always her guiding star and goal, although she did not know it.

Every time we wonder "What will the neighbours think?" we are standing in our own light and blocking our own goal. And how nervous we feel before an important interview, or if we have to speak in front of others! How shall I do? What will they think of me? Suppose I fail? Old instincts grip the belly as we quake inside and our knees tremble. As usual, our defence mechanisms are working to

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our disadvantage, but it is only because we are standing in our own light. It is as if 'I' have slipped out of my proper place, in the beginning, to become the end.

What can we do about it? Well, what do you want to do? Make up your mind and then lay out your statement, so: I WANT TO SPEAK TO HIM, or whatever it may be. Now make sure to keep yourself in the proper place, which is only in the beginning, inside, central. Now go for what you want, with all the skill you can. It is courage that keeps 'I' held firmly in the centre; and it is our 'nerves' that let 'I' slip out all over the place.

Of course, even in the end we may not get what we want. We may be tragically disappointed, ending up somewhere far distant from the goal of our first clear plan. But as we look back with longer views, we can often see the working out of a plan that was even better than our own. When experience is still on top of us, it is very hard to tell what may be loss or gain. It is better not to be too sure, meanwhile accepting experience as it comes, without prejudice. It works out in the end—if we are still there.

The quality which I believe to be of most account in life is the enduring willingness of sheer persistency, called 'guts'.

## 4: Are we too kind to animals?

*There are two kinds of kindness. One kind costs something. it is genuinely directed outwards. The other kind—often shown to animals and children—is really directed to ourselves. The spoilt child and the pampered animal owe little gratitude. It wasn't to them we were showing so much love.*

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Progress is a moot point. Have we progressed? Technically certainly, in our power over things. Thanks to the scientific method, we have more knowledge, and that is increasing hourly, formidably. Socially, there is less poverty, cruelty, drunkenness: there is more consideration for the under-dog. Social reform is in the air, and almost equally fashionable with all the political parties. Water is cheap, plumbing is good and cleanliness is the commonest of all the virtues. And yet one wonders whether fundamentally mankind is really better for all this material gain. We have the power, but not the wisdom to use it well. We lack a moral sense, in spite of our social progress and kindness to animals. The crime and torture, the burning and destruction of life and property, the wrecking of homes and the turning of men, women and children into wanderers in a wilderness, which has taken place in our own life-times—and been accepted as a matter of fact which may even

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shortly be repeated—has surely outstripped in magnitude of crime the darkest ages of world history.

And yet we look with comfort and pride at our hospitals and children's clinics, our schools and our homes for the aged, our social reforms and our kindness to animals. Surely we are kinder now than we were fifty, a hundred, five hundred years ago? Yes, I am sure we are. But are we not softer, too? And how much of our kindness is only softness of heart and a deterioration of our moral fibre, which is weakness of character, not strength?

I do not wish to suggest that all kindness is weakness, or to praise callousness as a virtue which the Nazis did. I do suggest, however, that the apparent cruelty and hardness of heart which has been displayed in our recent world history is a corrective and needed antidote for a softening in our moral fibre, which is a greater threat to human life and progress than even cruelty and suppression of personal freedom can be. Worse than pain is the inability to bear it if need be. Where life is stern reality, softness spells decay.

We must first distinguish two kinds of kindness, which are often confused within the common cloak of virtue. Yet they may be called true and false, or safe and dangerous.

True kindness costs trouble to the giver, but the purpose of false kindness is to save trouble. True kindness is realistic, fearless and faces facts, but compassionately. It therefore has a tough, enduring quality that may seem very stern. False kindness, on the other hand, is evasive of all such stern reality. Its purpose is to avoid pain and suffering, and to have our easy appetite for pleasure satisfied without price or responsibility. It is a fearful practice on the part of grown-up children, who are spoilt themselves, to spoil others, too, by robbing them of their 'guts' and the very stuff of independent personality. It strikes at the root of

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manhood, when it aims to make all safe and smooth and free from fear. It is sentimental nursery stuff, a wolf in sheep's clothing, immorality smothered in morality. It is 'mother' at her very worst, an octopus most dangerous to drag us mortals down. It is a devious and deceptively ingenious way of life that will exact a fearful price in time, when stern reality catches up with our retreating feet. It is called 'kindness' none the less, and may even invade the policies of government with its sickly sentimental fears.

Soon after Susan was born, Mrs. T. had lost her husband in circumstances for which she blamed herself, rightly or wrongly. Mrs. T. had had a difficult childhood herself with a stern father, and vowed that her daughter's life should not be spoilt in the same way. Besides, she had to make up to poor Susan for being fatherless. She also had a retriever called Bob to keep her daughter company. Mrs. T. was kindness itself. Until they became impossible to live with, Susan and Bob had their own way in everything. Then Bob started worrying sheep and among his other crimes he bit the postman. So he had to be shot. But when Susan got into trouble at school for stealing, there was no such simple remedy.

The attitude to life that trouble can and should be avoided is a very commonly accepted one. Of course, the kind doctor will take my illness away and will not hurt me in the process. (Too many aspirins.) The kind teacher will give me knowledge without the effort of experience, and the benefits of learning without tears. (But with too much to eat, I soon get fed up.) The kind politician will guarantee me a free health service, freedom from want, fear and unemployment, a pension for my old age and free burial. (Too much pampering.) And then a kind parson will en-

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sure me a free seat in heaven and a free issue of angelic wings. (Too much to hope for.) Of course, why not, he ought to, oughtn't he? Surely this happiness is *owed to me*?

Either it is or it is not. But it is quite certain that every spoilt child *thinks* it is.

There is another fallacy that enters into wrong kindness, besides this sentimental trick of identification with the comforts of another. It is the fun which we all obtain from having someone or something under our control. Bear-baiting and cock-fighting may be out of fashion, and despotism to-day is disapproved. But benevolent tyranny, with its concealed moral despotism, is very prevalent indeed. This tyranny is most kind; in the nursery ("Let mummy do it for you, darling, you're so slow!"); in the school ("Yes, Tommy, that's right!"); in the surgery as the doctor gives you an anaesthetic ("Don't struggle, breathe deeply, you'll be all right"); or in the House of Commons ("Give me your vote and then leave it all to me"). Yes, we shall be all right, but only *as long as he gets his own way*. With a little kindness shown to us, we shall always let the others get away with anything. Kindness is an anaesthetic—but it's dangerous.

Of course, we like being kind to children and to animals. We like to have a world beneath us, under our control. It gives us a comfortable feeling of well-being, importance and security. We do not like others being hurt. It is most disturbing, and we hate to be upset. To see another hurt is too suggestive that we might be hurt ourselves. And so we dearly love our animals, the 'pets'.

Two facts remain. One is that all benevolent tyranny is only benevolent as long as it has its own way. The other is that we could not care less about suffering that is not brought directly to our notice. The purpose of our sentimental attitude to life is to avoid all suffering. Therefore

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we either eliminate it altogether by our 'kindness'; or if we cannot do that, we pretend it is not there, or soon forget it. In either case, our little island Paradise must be preserved from hateful contact with the real world.

There is a much deeper and more important problem, however, which may affect our attitude to life still more adversely. *What are the contents of our inner world?* What are we made of, and what secrets do our inmost hearts contain, even in A.D. 1951? Surrounded by so much kindness (apart from a hideous war or two) how are we to relate our interior reality to that exterior reality, if such a feat is possible at all?

Psychological and physiological studies each confirm the theory of evolution. We are *humanimals*, continuously derived from earlier stock, and our civilization to-day is like the apex of a pyramid, the foundation of which is concealed within the tangled conflicts of the jungle. We are as it were complacently living on the summit slopes of a volcano, with those ancient forces rumbling within the tension of our tightened skins. Concealed deep down within us, the animals are there, the elephant and the snake, the deer and the wolf, the fury of the fire and the mighty torrent of the tumbling stream. Such is man's interior latent life. Such are the sources of his mysterious power. Such is the reality of his interior world—even now in A.D. 1951—from which he must make his flimsy, arduous bridge towards that outer world of bowler hats and income tax in which he has to live.

Don't let's believe it! Let's be kind to animals instead. The perils of our fearful conflict seem too much. Without a faith, either in God or in our own secrets of concealed yet real divinity, what is there to do but pin our faith upon some kindly human deity, whose benevolent tyranny will serve to keep us safe?

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As real persons in a real world, we have a real problem. The experience of human suffering is real, and our dodges, far from diminishing it, can only multiply the pain. For the reasons which I have given, I am not so sure that our national habit of kindness to animals is entirely the virtue it seems. Nationally, we may seem superior to Spain, whose blood and bull-fights provoke, not our approval, but only our anxious protests of protective sympathy. Yet as a realist I know that we in this country need a tougher, simpler, even cruder, way of life. There is real danger of our becoming sentimentalized, smoothed, fattened and obscured, as we are smothered up in too much kindness. The nature of life is inherently tragic, and we need more virile, lusty drama, as the Greeks well knew, to act as a spur and channel for our hearts' expression.

Are we too kind to animals—which include ourselves? Yes, in the wrong sense, much too kind. But in the right sense, still far from being kind enough—especially to those animals caged within ourselves.



## 5: Can we learn from dreams?

*"I had such a silly dream last night . . ." But was it really so silly? Do dreams reflect life—if so, on what principles and for what reasons do they choose the particular fragments they reflect? Dreams actually give direct glimpses of the mysterious hidden life inside each one of us.*

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There are all kinds of dreams. They are as various as we are, and our experience asleep is as multitudinous in its variety as is our waking life. It is not surprising that most of our dreams should be unimportant, meaningless, seeing that so much of our waking experience is also of no particular value. But to deny all value to dreams, as most of us do, is to show little understanding of the extraordinary variety and mystery of human experience.

Dreams are true. They are facts, as much as your finger or your chair is a fact. Like your finger or your chair, they are effects, not of one cause only, but of many. So many factors go to make up any one effect, that it is obviously bad argument to deduce that you dreamt of being run over by an express train because you had cheese for dinner, or that you travelled in your dream upon a bus because you had actually travelled on a bus the day before. True enough, but of all the many things that you had done

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why choose *that* bus? There must be some agent which selected any particular item from the whole mass of possibility.

It is obvious that dreams do not simply reflect waking experience. They select and distort it, taking fragments of life from here, there and everywhere (*even the future?*) from which to weave their curiously patterned tapestry. Some dream-states may be simply reflective. For instance, when you have been driving a car, or fishing on choppy water, you may feel as if you are doing the same thing in your sleep. But I have dreamt a whole cathedral I have never seen, with all its detail, in which an angelic figure stood over a stately tomb, with the tip chipped off one wing. As a miracle of invention, that was one better than even Pinewood Studios could do.

Without assuming anything about them, we can state certain facts about dreams, which are true to our common experience. They are 'activated images arranged in dramatic form'. We can only remember part of them, and the dreams themselves are always more than we can remember. The act of bringing a dream to memory changes its form to the sequence of events in time which is characteristic of our normal mode of thought, but is not characteristic of the form of the dream as it actually was when we were dreaming it. Dreams show the presence of a selective agent, who is a dramatic story-teller, active in sleep. The language and meaning of dreams is strange to us when awake. It is not so strange, when we remember our common use of metaphor in conscious thought, particularly in slang. Dreams are mixed metaphors set in a peculiar relation.

In all the countless years of human history, how many millions of our dreams must have passed down the drain of sleep into oblivion! If dreams have anything to teach us, this is surely a most astonishing example of wasted op-

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portunity. But, from another point of view, it is a proof of how much we still can learn with profit from the vast range of our experience.

The attitude of the conscious mind to dream experience is always the same. Dreams are nonsense. "I had such a silly dream last night!" But which is the silly one—the waking mind which does not believe it has a deeper, hidden, life—or the dreamer who has his own reality, although it may be expressed in terms which are unfamiliar?

The attitude of the psychologist to dreams is the same as it is to all experience, familiar or not. "What have we here?" It can be summed up in the one word *respect*. "What does this mean to you, within the special context of your experience, now and in the past?" Attentively relaxed, the waking mind flits here and there in free association (*that reminds me of . . .*), and it is sometimes surprising what concealed problems may come to light from consideration of a 'silly' dream. Dreams, when considered with respect, reveal drama and design, will and intention, memory and hope.

But we must not expect exact knowledge or precise advice from dreams. They are not exact instruments for the scientific mind. They are the stuff of life itself, well suited for the inquiring touch of ordinary folk, children and artists—indeed, for all who have not lost the joy of intuition's guesswork.

At a rough calculation, in twenty-five years I have studied about 50,000 dreams. I would not have missed one of them, for they have been my wisest teachers. But in spite of so much close attention, I do not claim to know much about dreams. They are beyond our knowing, and should never be too closely or cleverly interpreted.

Out of so many, I can only choose three for consideration here. They come from three different patients under-

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treatment, which, of course, introduces certain conditions that do not belong to ordinary dreams, but that fact alone is not enough to be the 'cause' of these dreams. It is, however, an important factor in dream formation, that a patient knows that the dream is 'for the doctor'.

1. Miss X is in the fifties and suffers from such extreme anxiety that she is 'house-bound'. Her mother broke this child's connections with the world in very early childhood, and she has always been split between her two, inner and outer, worlds, in consequence. She dreamed:

*I was having tea with Queen Mary, alone in a small elegant house. The others had left me, laughing at me, implying that I should never escape. However, we had a pleasant party and I found to my surprise that I had no difficulty in leaving by a door that opened easily. I went over a bridge, down some steps to a low-level platform where I waited for the train.*

Why 'Queen Mary'? She is the queen-mother, i.e. the mother exalted to the highest rank, the best-mother-in-the-world, in contrast with the patient's own, who seemed to her to be the very worst. The relationship is elegant and intimate, in complete contrast to her experience in childhood. The 'others' laugh at her, as she has always been laughed at for being 'neurotic'; but—here is something new—she finds that she is free. The door is open and she can get out. What is more, there is now a bridge, a connection with the world outside, and by passing over it she can be 'born again'. But what has happened so to release her from her life-long bondage? The dreamer seems to suggest it all started when she met 'Queen Mary'. But who, really and truly, can this 'Queen Mary' be? Have we all got one inside ourselves, in the 'Kingdom of Heaven' that is within us? I wonder. If we have, it would be nice to

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meet her ("have a cup of tea with her", as the dreamer puts it). But—have we this inner 'royal' friend and guide? What answer would *you* give from *your* experience?

2. Y is a medical student in the early twenties and his last year at hospital. He has been 'split', having never been allowed the needed time for his sensitive nature to find its proper roots and grow. Instead, he lived in his head, treating everything on the intellectual level, acutely aware of his heart's dissociation from the train of events. He dreamed:

*We were having a demonstration in obstetrics, but the babies were being born in a cowshed. I had to get there through some very long grass, over which I sprang like a frog. I knew the baby was being born too quickly. Then I was with an elderly woman, lying with her under water in a queer quietness. I could see the banks of the river were lined with men on one side and women on the other, and they were all discussing the situation, saying, "How shocking!"*

The cowshed has a Christian sound, early, primitive (but still true for all of us?). 'Lost in the long grass', he sprang up to intellectual precocity and prematurity. As it was in his own experience, so also in the dream, the pressure of time is too intense, and the baby is born too quickly. The effect of such impatient pressure can only be regression, a protective return to an earlier state: and so he blends his life in the unconscious with the imagined woman of his dreams. The sense of shame is derived straight from his own experience, but the picture of the stream of life, flowing between male and female banks, is instructive of what is in truth and so might also be for him. (For brevity and power, could you improve upon the dreamer's choice of images?)

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3. Z is recently married and has had an intolerable conflict between a jealously possessive mother ("Darling, it's only for your good, but I don't really trust him!") and her—in fact quite charming—husband. Her two worlds of yesterday and to-morrow have been at daggers drawn. She dreamed:

*I was going to move into a new house. It was the same as the one I had lived in with my parents as a child, but not quite so elaborate. Very clearly in my mind I saw the new name: it was 'Swan's Oracle'.*

I gave the patient every opportunity by free association, guesswork and everything else, to find out the meaning of her dream. She was as much in the dark at the end as in the beginning. She had no idea that the swan was the traditional symbol of the soul ('white bird'). She thought an oracle was a 'kind of prophecy', and not the guarded mouthpiece of the Goddess, which is what she was. But put the two facts together and we know—what she did not—that the name of her new house (herself) was to be 'The mouthpiece of the soul'. Was that wishful thinking, or might it perhaps be true?

Have we an inner guide to influence our waking lives, or is this dramatic guardian of ours only the servant of our dreams?

The important fact, if dreams are evidence, is that they are little, if at all, under the influence of consciousness. They are, as it were, a different field of experience which provides a different kind of evidence of our immortality. There is another side to life, which is not only real but very powerful.

The moon has another side behind its face, concealed. So also is there not more in life, and in ourselves, than meets even the most intimate eye?

## 6: Must the generations fight?

*Adolescence necessarily involves breaking away. The young human animal has got to free itself from its parents' apron-strings if it is ever to become true man or woman. But the amount of strain this causes—the bitterness or good nature of the struggle within the family—depends mainly on the parents.*

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Like chickens out of their shells and seeds through the soil, babies must break through the covers of maternal care and the cords of mother's apron-strings. Growth is like a very slow explosion, and bombs are birth gone mad.

Life is a very gradual outbreak through the resistant stuff of our protective coverings. First there is birth, then weaning comes within a year, as the infant begins to establish its own separate identity. Then follows another long protective phase of guarded childhood, until the accumulated driving force of adolescence finally forces open the gates of its prison, to release a 'self', a person free at least from childhood's bonds, free to choose its course in life, though never free from the backward pressure of resistant circumstance. But if the driving force of life has been well-nourished, there is no prison from which this young Houdini cannot hope to free himself in time, except his own, which is—*himself*, the given limits of his personality.

## *Must the generations fight?*

With the energy of will confronted by the resistant wall of circumstance, we are like cheese-mites confronted by an interminable mass of cheese, through which we drive our endless way from birth to death—and even then, perhaps, more cheese?

Adolescence is a major crisis in our lives, when we must lose old loyalties to find fresh interests, and when we break old ties to find new and different attachments. But to be thus born again, some part of us must die: and for all we gain there is also something that we lose. If we retain the best of both worlds, one or both is false, for the price of life is certain sacrifice. Adolescence means a multitude of changes and dangers; it is often a painful business of seeing hopes destroyed and letting loyalties go.

It is as if, for each of us, the present moment, *now*, must always take the strain, when past and future pull at tug-of-war upon the rope of life. The strain is very real when mother is at one end and wife upon the other, and conflicting loyalties of son and husband may be well-nigh intolerable unless both mother and wife can give a little. If the son has passed through his adolescent phase and freed himself from the mother-tie, then he is marriageable and can meet his wife as mate, upon the level. But many of us have not passed through this critical phase of earning our independence. Many of us are still unweaned and tied by uncut umbilical cords to mother's apron-strings. Then we demand of wife that she be mother; or else, if so much dependence on her should seem to be intolerable, that she should be our slave. We want the privilege of marriage, but not the responsibility. Then husband and wife do not treat each other 'on the level', because they are not in fact on the same level. If they are fighting, as they sometimes are, they are not engaged in a fair fight on level ground. They fight instead to gain a mean advantage, which can



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be firmly fixed because the other has been completely victimized. One is to be top and the other does not matter, in our modern sense of moral victory. In other words, the unweaned state of mind and life demands the privileges but not the responsibilities of parenthood, where children should be seen a little but not heard at all, and the weakest must go to the wall.

At adolescence, we enter a new order of life, in which we should all be on the same level, independently free to engage in the battle of life according to our different abilities and opportunities. The previous order was a hierarchy with parent figures at the top and children down below. But the new order is a true democracy, with no such caste distinctions. The transitional phase takes time and covers several years for boy or girl, which may be years of great confusion.

Of those who should serve us in authority, some favour the cheese-mite and some want all the cheese. Some make life too easy for us and rob us of our own initiative. But some make it too hard by making us feel ashamed and impotent, so that we are split in two within our anguished selves. So whom can we trust with power, who is there who will not exploit it, as guardians of our growing years? Teachers, preachers, politicians, Trades Union leaders or shop stewards? They all need watching, for their most well-meaning efforts are often most unwise. What about our parents? Well, let's look and see. How did they do in fact, and how are you (or yours) doing now? The question is worth looking at, for upon the answer depend so many of our to-morrows.

Power displayed on one side leads automatically, as by a law of balances, to a display of power on the other. Pull devil, pull baker; pull (or push) parent, pull (or push) child. Manners are not learnt by precept, but by example.

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The possessive parent makes the child possessive, too. The tyrant parent makes the child a bully; the fussy, anxious, too-protective parent makes the frightened child; the ambitious parent who is in too much of a hurry, makes the child untimely, worried and easily upset; the unstable parent, whose restrictions and concessions are without plan or pattern, makes the child go haywire. The years of adolescence are the years that prove the nature and meaning of what has gone before. It is too late then to correct past errors, and the sins of the parents are indeed passed on through their children to succeeding generations.

If parents wrong the child, the child will wrong the parents. If parents fight the child, the child will fight the parents, or else develop conflict in himself. Shall we ever be able to develop a generation that will not use power to bully either one another or themselves? If so, how?

Are wars inevitable within the home as well as in the larger world beyond? Must the generations always fight one another? Must father fight mother, parent fight child, and you and I join in the bloody scramble for our bread and butter? Are we, in fact, bound by our very nature to be as we are and to do what lies concealed within our inmost selves? Is civilization after all only a camouflaged jungle, whose polite veneer has been cracked open in these recent years, to show the horrid truth that is beneath?

I want to answer 'Yes' and 'No', and to make clear the distinction that I have already partly indicated. There are two kinds of conflict, and two ways of fighting. I am all for one, and all against the other.

Yes, I believe life is a battle, in the sense that we all exist because of a passionate intensity of personal difference. I want the passionate intensity, every bit of it, because on it we all depend for our depth and drama, our will, purpose and creative enterprise. It is the heart of love

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as well as the intensity of life. It needs heightening, intensifying, dramatizing, and not flattening, sentimentalizing and castrating, in order to make life safe for cold and squalid folk. I believe that life is splendid, fearful, lovely, awful and packed with mystery and creative power. I believe that you and I, and mother and father, parent and child, employer and employee, to-morrow and yesterday, are all pulling at opposite ends of the rope, in tolerable tension. But we must keep the tension tolerable, never trying to get rid of the strain on the other end of the rope, and never believe that, because one end is right and the other wrong, therefore the rope should be cut.

That is where we go wrong. Tension, difference, conflict, strain, these are indeed inevitable. But when we go to war in moral guise, it is to cut the rope and rid us of this intolerable strain.

The question, therefore, is how much strain is tolerable before the rope breaks? Children soon reach breaking-point. But our experience of adolescence should be such as to initiate us into a way of life in which we can bear the greatest strain, by willingly accepting it, without breaking.

That, certainly, would make marriage easier to bear, and divorce at least unlikely.

When the rope breaks on one level, it starts another battle on a different dimension, as the strain flies from the horizontal level of good honest rough-and-tumble Cornish wrestling (or husband and wife) to the vertical dimension of moral superiority, where pots call kettles black, and we all play "I'm king of the castle, get down you dirty rascal". But it isn't a game any longer, it's a war. Of course, it's a good war, by definition. And, of course, the other side are wrong and ought to be exterminated. And, of course, God is on our side. And, of course, you ought and you must . . .

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(and bless you, of course you will! You can never resist so moral an appeal).

But the fact is, we're on the wrong level, you and I, when we get up there. We don't belong up there. We belong on the ground, amongst the wrestlers, with our feet on the earth, together with all the others.

If we are ever to develop a generation in which bullying is obsolete, we must first put supreme power in its proper place, which is in the hands of a moral authority who is not of this world, and not a bully, either. It is quite certain that no man of the world can hold supreme authority, whether in the home or in any larger place of government, without corruption. Women are even worse. It should be quite obvious that the dimension of Divine Judgment does not belong to parent or child, to preacher or to politician. It belongs to 'Our Father which art in Heaven', whoever He may be, but not to us. Indeed, we need Him very badly to take this moral burden from our infant backs. If you believe that He belongs to all of us, it surely cannot be right to steal Him for ourselves and then get Him to exterminate half His own family? That would be worse than stealing a shilling from father's trouser pocket. But it is not yet as severely punished.

Haven't we all stolen something from that father's pocket, claiming it as all our own by right? But I wonder if we can ever hope to get away with it, when in all our lives we can never have the first word or the last?

## 7: Mother v. wife: the conflict

*The over-loving, over-anxious mother stores up trouble. Either her son will 'run away to sea' — literally or metaphorically — to get out of her way. Or else he becomes one of those husbands who live mainly in their well-mothered past.*

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A good mother is life's covered starting point. At first, we are like little cave-dwellers, safe within her walled security. But the purpose of our first security is to enable us eventually to face insecurity. The value of the nourishment she provides is that we should be able to go hungry later, if we must, because of that inner strength with which we have been generously endowed by her. This first experience of security and nourishment, with opportunity for growth by means of increasingly complex 'play', enables us to find our feet. We can then move out into the world in which we are free, not to choose what our world should be like, but rather what we will do to make it more friendly and convenient than it was when first we found it. Mother must be the patient guardian of our little clocks, if she is to help us grow in time.

Not too much and not too little, with just enough at the right time, a mother's role is a quietly exacting one. She pays attention from her heart, watching—but not fus-

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ing!—over her unseemly young. Pay she must, all the time, for good mothering is truly a life of sacrifice, as those she loves leave her behind to make their own adventurous way through life's uncertainty. But a bad mother is a monstrous octopus who loads her young with false values, and, even when she urges them on, still holds them back. She is a cave with a stone rolled across the mouth, an infant's tomb.

Some mothers are obviously bad through carelessness, laziness, indifference or ineptitude. Others fail from trying too hard to be good, and from assuming that they know—or ought to know—more than they do. They have read all the latest psychological text-books, and have done what they were told. They have planned every moment of their children's lives, so that no opportunity for good should ever be wasted. ("Don't waste time!") They have left no spaces in their children's lives, and there are no corners of experience into which they have not pried. ("You will tell mother all about it, won't you?") Such anxious smothering is a breeding-ground, not for life's vigorous drama, but for fear, meanness and acquisitiveness.

Children are 'spoilt' who have too much, too often or too soon; or else too little, too rarely or too late. If mother's job is nourishment, we can soon have too much upon the plate. (By the way, the word 'education' comes from the Latin *educare*, and means 'to nourish'. Does not education sometimes give us too much, too often and too soon, making us 'fed up'?) Perhaps we are all a bit spoilt, in one way or another? But more often by good intentions than by bad, I think.

I am sure Mrs. X. meant well. Intentionally, her family was only small, a son and daughter: but she meant to do the best for them. Her nursery, her nurses and her children

## Mother v. wife: the conflict

must be clean. Her house was as spotless as were all her intentions. She chose the best of everything—food, toys and governesses, schools, books and friends. She watched every movement of her children's lives with urgent care, choosing and smoothing every path ahead in case their errant feet might stray. She thought she always knew what was best for them; and according to her lights, they had it.

Her husband felt the atmosphere at home a bit too strenuously virtuous, but he was a very busy man whose business absorbed his life. He found more consolation behind the pages of the *Financial Times* than in the excessive comforts of his home. Therefore he was not unduly disturbed when his son decided to join the Merchant Navy and practically ran away to sea when he was 16. The boy had felt he needed room to breathe, but his thoughtlessness came near to breaking his mother's heart. However, her affections now centred all the more firmly on her remaining daughter.

She grew up, as daughters do, almost without her mother's noticing it. She was her baby still, in spite of being at the university. She brought a young man home, a medical student, and got herself engaged without consulting her mother. From her mother's point of view, could any man be good enough? "Darling, it's only for your good. I only want you to be happy. Of course, you must choose for yourself and I would not dream of interfering; but you are still so very inexperienced! Really, he isn't good enough for you." The daughter had to endure countless attacks on her young man, insidious pin-pricks that were the more difficult to bear because they were so unimportant in themselves. Accumulatively, the atmosphere at home was very tense, but fortunately her heart and his were together strong enough to hold a steady course. Her mother was kindness itself upon her wedding day. "Dar-

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ling, I only want you to be happy. But—you know there is always a home for you to return to when you need it.” Is it surprising that her daughter viewed the prospect of returning home even for a day with some dismay?

A man of 35 dreamt *I found my mother sleeping in my wife's bed*. Knowing Freudians may cry “Oedipus”, but this is a very practical problem for each one of us, and requires a most general, and not only sexual, approach. Above all, it is a time problem and states the fact that the encroaching past does interfere with our enjoyment of the simple present, confusing values and making doubts and conflict everywhere. Wives are wives, and mothers are mothers: but what husband does not somewhat confuse the two, to the disadvantage of the wife?

Mother-in-law is a music-hall joke because she is too big a problem to be taken seriously. She stands for the past. The wife stands for the future, and the husband-son is in the present, torn between the two. He has these two women in his bed, as it were, and one or other is constantly blown out by the violent explosion of a quarrel which seems to rise from nothing. But this is the most explosive mixture of all time, and it takes only the most innocent remark about the pies that mother used to make, or the way she darned his socks, to fire the fuse. The new is always obscured and under-valued by reference to the old, and the wife will always have her work cut out to keep mama-in-law well in the background, where she belongs.

The problem here for all of us is principally one of direction. Mother is behind us, in the past. Meanwhile life, in the stream of time, flows on. But which way are we going, on or back? And has mother got into wife's bed, so that we are not really moving on at all, but only trying to renew the benefits of our privileged past?



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We are like cine-cameras and cine-projectors. From our first impressions of experience, we have been taking photographs which have become impressed upon the pattern of our sensibility. Our past exists in picture form within ourselves, from which it is projected forth, as in a cinema, to throw its patterns on the world outside. This process of 'projection' accounts for some very curious values which we impose on other persons and things. It also accounts for our attitude towards them, which is rarely entirely determined by factors in the present. For all of us to some extent, some more, some less, the past is our maternal octopus which holds us tight within its unseen tentacles.

So much has been, and is still now, given. But what is our attitude towards these gifts and to the giver? Too often, I think the right word is *exploitation*. We take what has been given (brains or good looks, home or schooling, our country and the harvest which it yields, the benefits of past tradition hardly earned by our forerunners in the race of life) as if that was all owed to us, to be expected, due for our enjoyment. We want more of such advantages, either more cheaply or at no cost at all, as when mother delivered the goods so easily for us (but not for her). For what we have not, we envy others and bear them resentment for having more.

By trying to smooth it flat, we make the world of our experience much rougher than it is. Getting our own back, grasping what we've never had, or keeping what we've got, is the practice of all spoilt children ever since the world began. Still living in the past, we defend ourselves in anxious frenzy against the flow of future change. So is not my mother still in my wife's bed?

Growing up is gaining experience, so that our range of choice and sense of value is improved. But there is this danger in our growing old, that not only does the flow of

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time encrust our arteries, but also our very souls and selves, until we are like tortoises, shell-backed and time-encrusted. It is as if by the very process of our living, we ensure our death. How, then, can we keep young in our advancing years? How can we be born again, not into the senility of second childhood, but in the freshness of eternal youth, as we can see around us some have done?

In order to keep young, if we are not to be smothered to death by all that weight of habit, of accumulated knowledge, and material property which we prize so much, we need to slough off our time-encrusted tortoise-shells from time to time, advancing defencelessly towards the future in near-nakedness, as when we first were born. We need to experience occasional change, and can experience greatest gain even when it may seem at the time to be most regrettable. Loss of any kind is never quite so bad, if what is taken from us can be freely given. Increasing wisdom depends more on what we can shed than upon what we can acquire; and in moving on to fresh adventure, rather than in building palaces where our wealth may be secure. We shall be smothered by our accumulated rings of growth acquired in time, unless we can accept each forward movement as it comes. Rings beyond rings, through the timely tunnels of experience, even beyond the door of death itself, which is just another ring, our rebirth is in fact continuously repeated.

Exploiting mother still, spoilt children manage to avoid the facts of life. But by so constantly avoiding death and loss, they must the more ensure what they are most trying to avoid—which brings unnecessary pain for others, as well as for themselves.

## 8: Why are fathers out of fashion?

*Something has happened in our modern world to hold men's freedom captive. Father, the independent man, is restricted in a thousand different ways. Mother, the old octopus, holds the reins of government — 'for our own good.' Father, once the 'Big Noise', has become 'the Little Man'.*

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In our own families, we know that fathers often make good mothers. (Daddy is father at his most protective, least offensive, best.) The opposite, however, is not usually the case, for mothers generally make bad fathers. Women in authority are apt to become petty tyrants, with more nuisance value than they are worth.

The well-balanced family has one good mother (for security and nourishment), one good father (for stimulus, excitement, change), and some children of very doubtful virtue yet. But many families are not so lucky. They may have two mothers or two fathers, who may be good or bad. Or they may have none at all. And then the children are liable to be upset.

Father is (or should be) 'the Big Noise'. In principle, he is movement, change, stimulus. He is the arrow seeking its distant target and the stone which shatters the mirrored stillness of the pool, provoking rings beyond rings of spread-

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ing response. He is the stranger, the mysterious visitor, the bringer of messages from the unknown, and he is possessed of much nuisance value in spite of the fact that from his journeys as hunter, he 'brings home the bacon'.

But father is out of fashion nowadays in our much-mothered world.

Father is, or should be, big and strong. There is (or should be) a certain weakness, a quiet responsiveness and imperturbable serenity, about a woman. And certainly a child is weakness itself. There is, therefore, a great problem for us all in how power uses strength, how weakness is exploited, and how much suffering the sensitivity of inexperience can bear. If weakness is really a 'bad thing', then it is just bad luck on women and children, because they will have to find protection where they can.

When David met Goliath he probably had the wind up. Yet every day in any ordinary family some little less-than-David meets some big more-than-Goliath, and he is certainly not allowed to throw stones! So what does our little David do with the 'Big Noise'?

Each one of us has many everyday solutions for such anxious times, in order to escape the pressure of anxiety. "I couldn't care less!" pretends there is no problem, and prefers to live in a fool's paradise. Some, who are afraid of the uncertainty of personal relationships, behave like jackdaws, collecting 'things' (which also includes knowledge about things), fixing them in tight security, safe against all possible attack. Some begin at the wrong end, jumping to conclusions in order to avoid the dangers of more timely travelling. (They are exactly what they ought to be and expect us to be the same.) Some find it safer to join the big battalions, becoming a still 'Bigger Noise' by out-Goliath-ing Goliath. (The aid of their own personal idea of God is sometimes very useful here.) And some give up the ghost

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(or spirit), finding an inward cave within themselves where they can feel safe from the provoking stimulus of change.

Of course, such habits of escape from anxiety, though all too common, are not really necessary. You *can* walk up to Goliath (but conceal your stones!) and say "Hullo". If you are very brave, you can even show your disagreement or disapproval. But children usually cannot express any opinion whatever about Father. He is too big a noise for that. Besides, he is indubitably right, because he says so. All the weight is on his side, with none whatever on the child's. (This is especially true, of course, if Mother is the 'father' of the family, as is nowadays so often the case. Her word may be an absolute, though inconsistent, tyranny.)

Tommy had been doing biology at school, and brought home a weedy mess of tadpoles in a jar, which he was examining on the kitchen floor. Mother, whose mind is on her cooking: "Put that mess outside at once, Tommy! All over my nice clean floor!" Tommy, paying more attention to his tadpoles than to his mother: "What for?" Mother, whose family cares have for too long stretched her patience beyond breaking-point: "I'll tell your father when he comes home, and then you'll get what for!"

Tommy's father, like many another, enjoyed his little flutter with the football pools. Tommy had heard him say it was something for nothing, which was nice if you could get it. But when Tommy tried it on and pinched a lonely-looking bob off the kitchen dresser, his father gave him a good belting.

In the face of so much, and such contradictory, authority, it is almost impossible for any child to express exactly what he feels and to be true to his own inner judg-

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ment. That is why, as we grow up, we lose so much of our innate sincerity.

Yes, Father brings home the bacon, sometimes quite a lot of it. So far, so good. But the trouble is that apart from so much usefulness, there is also about him a great deal of nuisance value. Here is any wife's opinion of any husband: "Men! Stupid creatures with their airs of self-importance. Talk, talk, talk, they're just a nuisance. They come butting in when you are busy and upset all the arrangements. Of course, they're wonderful with the children—for about five minutes. When you've had them with you all day, Father says you ought not be so impatient, then goes out and leaves you to put them to bed. They spring extra people on you for dinner when you've nothing in the house. ("Anything will do." Anything *won't* do!) Talk about inconsiderate! When you're tired, they want you to go out and be your most bright and charming self; but when you want a bit of fun, they are either too busy, or too tired, or not at home. *Men!* If it were not for men, life would be worth living. Everything would be clean and tidy, and we should all be happy. *Men!* You never know what they will do next, but you do know you wish they wouldn't do it. If they would only keep out of the way and let us go on with the work. *Men . . . !*"

There is much truth in all she says, for Father stands for will, choice, change, departure and uncertainty: while Mother stands for comfort, security, nourishment, resistance to change and a conservative tradition. He comes and goes. She sticks around.

But women can compete for nuisance value, and they often do.

Something has been happening in our modern world to hold men's freedom captive. Sometimes the tyranny is cruel, ruthless, blatant. Sometimes it coos like a dove, bene-

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volently singing a maternal lullaby to the soul's freedom. But whether freedom is lost in the concentration camps of a prison state, or in the planned advantages of a modern socialist democracy, the point is that freedom of choice is being lost to-day in favour of a false freedom-from-fear, freedom-from-want and freedom from the challenge of experience. Father, the independent man, is restricted by as many strings as a butterfly in its cocoon. Mother, the old octopus, holds the reins of government (of course, of necessity and for our own good, she says: she always did say that) and you and I will be all right if we do as we are told and vote for Nannie. So what is our direction now, forward or back, when mother has stolen father's stick and become the 'Big Noise'?

If government, religion, law and education are all on mother's side, then I am sorry for father, whether he be 'Big Noise' or simply 'Little Man'.

But what have we done with 'father', and how has this deep displacement, this twist of values, come about? It is all part and parcel of the 'progress' of our recent years, in which material gains and all the power over others which springs from more-in-the-mind, have increasingly usurped the place of the deeper, spiritual, values of love, peace, joy, courage, simplicity and humility. Increase in mother's comforts, with everyone entitled to all they want, has ousted the sterner discipline of father's rule. Wishful thinking dominates our world, and the mind has stolen the royal throne which rightfully belongs to the will. In the battle between 'mother' and 'father', earth and heaven, material comfort and spiritual discipline, desire and will, it now appears that we have all been exploiting mother's gifts, but ignoring father's will. In earth and heaven too, father is out of fashion nowadays.

Of course, our Father which is in Heaven is out of

## *Why are fathers out of fashion?*

fashion, too. We need not fear Him, because He has no stick. (Mother has that?) We can do it all ourselves, it seems, and plan ourselves to Paradise with mother's help. The Devil himself is a nice chap, if you only make friends with him. Why not, for there is no good or evil now, only expediency. Surely, we can soon find a protective formula to cover everything?

But what of luck, chance, fate or accident, that immeasurable factor of uncertainty which is as much a fact of life as you or I are? If any man exercises but once his inalienable right to choose, then all the calculations of the planners must go wrong, because that is the factor which they must leave out. If only they could be sure we would not choose to change it, their world would be quite safe. If only they could leave out Father, mother would take care of us, as little monsters in her monstrous womb.

Listen to this from St. Mark, chapter 13, verse 35: "Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

So let us pay attention to our 'mother', which is our past, our house, our body, the earth, the world. Let us enjoy what she gives us, sharing it amongst her children. But do not let her take the Master's place, which never can be hers by right.

We need the father and the mother and the child, each in their proper place, because we, you and I and every one of us, are designed precisely as such a patient trinity. It is the way we have been made in the image of our Maker.



## 9: Why do we get ill?

*Are we only malingering — or do we really need a pause for our overworked nerves? In too many lives illness is the only chance a man — or woman — gets to let up, to relax, to reach down to his or her own deeper levels. For others, illness is a weapon enabling them to maintain their tyranny over their own circle.*

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Illness is not just a bad thing. It is not a devil by which we are possessed, which can be magically exorcized by the doctor; nor is it merely a nuisance, to be dismissed as soon as possible. It is a deviation from the normal which has both cause and purpose. It is certainly needed by some part of our physical economy, or it would not occur. It may even be desired: because, inconvenient though illness must always seem to be in some ways, it may at the same time be very convenient in others.

Indeed, we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Physically, we are much more complex in our mechanisms than the most marvellous machine. But all machinery depends at some point upon a man to make it go, and here, with this human element, there also enters an even greater mystery. (A highly skilled engineer came to see me about his wife. He could do nothing whatever with her, the un-

## *Why do we get ill?*

reasonable woman. He had been trying to screw up her nuts—but women are not like motor cars!)

It is not surprising that constant mis-use, sudden shock or the endless stress of too-exacting circumstance, should sometimes upset the subtle balance of our apple-cart. What is much more surprising is that we should expect the whole matter to be put right again, swiftly and painlessly, by someone else on payment of a fee.

Psychologists have been regarded, rightly enough I am sure, with some suspicion by their medical colleagues. Quacks! Imagination! Nonsense! Yet the psychological viewpoint claims that illness is not merely for taking away, nor are symptoms meant for simple removal whether by knife or the contents of a bottle. We psychologists ask a question about illness: "What have we to learn from all this, you and I?" We see many causes more dangerously infective than those long-named germs—causes such as despair, for instance (whether social or domestic), resentment too long unexpressed, or any state of mere existence which has lost its deeper meaning. These are all greater enemies of health and happiness than those little fellows who can be stained and captured on a microscopic slide. (They were not tyrants until we made them so.) Psychologists want you as travellers, each with the passport of your own responsibility, to work your passage in a big way.

"Would you see a patient for me, doctor? She is over seventy, in a nursing home for her fifth abdominal operation. I think there must be something psychological in her case!" There was. The first operation had been when she was twenty-one. She had been married at eighteen to a man twenty-five years older, whose cruelty she found unbearable. He forced her against her will and constantly

## Why do we get ill?

neglected her. She would hate to bear his child and did not. She had her first operation (a small ovarian cyst, the surgeon said) instead. Her motive of revenge was doubly poisoned against her husband and herself—and life. She gained attention for herself and got her own back too, in this negative dramatic way. She made her husband pay. He died, but still she went on playing to the same old tune, revenge.

She said, "Somewhere in myself of course I always knew!" At seventy, what could we do for her? So she had her fifth operation. It was her last because she died soon after.

Have you ever *wanted* to be ill? I think we all have sometimes, when we have felt too tired to face the unrelenting pressure of events any longer. How else could we escape—and indeed what better escape is there than to the cosy comforts of bed, with benevolent attention now directed upon us for a welcome change? It's like old times to be Mummy's privileged little one again. If only nature would obligingly supply sufficient cause to make our heart's regression seem not only compulsory, but even an unwilling martyrdom. Luckily for us, nature is often obedient to these deep desires, and the doctor plays his needful part in the conspiracy.

And so we can find peace in illness, when we most need it and there is none other to be found. The doctor is wise who does not hurry our recovery. But he is wiser still who knows the kindly part that he and illness play in the relief of distressed lives.

Fatigue needs rest, and who shall say that ours is not a tired, plagued world? Most people find life harder nowadays. In industry, in spite of shorter hours, the drive is fierce and I for one don't blame the ones who do not

## *Why do we get ill?*

always work too hard, for human standards are not to be determined only by the dictates of efficiency. In farms and shops, the filling-in of forms is such a frustrating plague; and most of all, the pressure is excessive in the home, where women's always unpaid overtime now has no margin of grace beyond the compelling chores of having to make do and mend.

There is no doubt that we shall, and do, obtain the sickness that we need in our tired and over-taxed society. Perhaps no one is to blame, but it is at least ironical that the same social pressure which creates so much of our fatigue, frustration and sickness should also provide us with the means to enjoy—for nothing?—the benefits of being ill. It must prove an arduous task, however, to balance so subtle an account.

Of course, there is no intentional deception about this search for social safety in the security of our beds. The mathematical precision of the balanced opposites of the 'pull-Devil, pull-baker' of our unconscious forces can only operate effectively if we do not know anything about it. As soon as such deep desires come out of their concealment into the light of conscious day, they don't work any more. Sickness will never work for those who only try, because it must come from the hidden levels of the will where the deepest knowledge is of what we need. Need—or want? It is very hard to say which is the proper word to use, but here is a story of the want—or need?—for power dominating a person's life and obtaining a most successful standard of tyranny through her incurable invalidism.

All was well in the life of Beatrice for just as long as all went well. She must have her own way in one way or another—and what a way it was! She had early ambitions to be a singer, but neither the voice nor self-discipline to

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reach the high standard which she was determined to achieve. (Nothing was ever good enough, not even the best, for Beatrice.) She despised the stage as socially inferior, by which it lost her considerable talent for acting in the limelight. For, stage or no stage, she must be in the centre of it, with the spotlight on.

In her early days she was charming (but too charming?), kind (too kind?) and most unselfish (oh, much too unselfish!). With a finger in every social pie, concerned with all good works, and minding every business but her own, she never seemed to think of herself at all. She married an inoffensive little man, but, in spite of all her management, he completely failed to supply her with the social scope she needed. She suffered from migraine. As she grew older, and her efforts to be always in demand met with less success, she gradually lost touch with her previous interests and became increasingly fixed within the retracting horizon of her home. She had no children and her health was poor. So was her husband in more ways than one, poor man, for the whole household now centred round the growing problems of her precarious health. Fortunately she had a faithful maid, but even the total sacrifice of this all-too-willing life was not enough to satisfy the growing invalid. Doctors came and went, at great expense, but none of them could help her. Her husband's life was that of a puppet on a string, tweaked here and there at her behest to guard her lest even worse befall: and yet, befall it always did. Her heart got worse and worse, or so at least she felt, with her constant flutterings as if an abyss was opening to swallow her completely. In her distress, she must hang on to someone, doctor or nurse, husband or maid. "I am so weak, dear, you must never leave me!"

Weak? Although half-dead, she ruled her world with an unquestionable tyranny.

## Why do we get ill?

The doctor's job is to get the patient well as quickly and as painlessly as possible. But how? Rightly, we shall judge his methods by his results, in the long run. Is illness a curse needing the magic of the exorcist? Are we like cars to be driven to the garage or take turn in the queue for overhaul? Or is our sickness a statement of our inmost pertinent reality, and healing an art which claims our deepest understanding of the art of life itself?

Surely all sickness is at least partly due to a fault in relationship, in that mysterious zone which is defined by the word 'between'? Our sickness can never be only physical, mechanical: it is also metaphysical, in the invisible medium of the relationship *between* the driver and the car, *between* the man and his work, *between* the housewife and her home, *between* the self and circumstance, *between* the people and their government.

Our greatest unsolved problems are between our selves. There is the rub. When the strain in that mysterious zone becomes too great, then we need to be ill. But there can be no mechanical or forced solutions for such problems of relationship. Invisible as such problems are, nevertheless they are real. Our need to be ill is the measure of our ignorance of our real problems. If our doctor is to heal us, he must be teacher, too.

## 10: A reader's confession

"I continually run people down and nag both my husband and my children, and make endless rows but never with anyone whom I feel to be a stronger character than myself. . . . How, oh how can I conquer this?"

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When I read this letter I said to myself: *This is the world speaking to the world*; at least, to quite a bit of it—to you and me. It is one of many letters I have received in answer to these articles, but let Mrs. X speak for herself:

Dear Sir,

I felt I must write and tell you how *very* helpful I'm finding your articles.

I am thirty-nine, married, with three children, and for years I have suffered from a terrible feeling of guilt coupled with an inferiority complex and fears too numerous to mention and in spite of visits to various psychologists and an intensive psycho-analysis seem very little better and life is a constant fight with myself with no peace of mind or happiness either for myself or my family.

I do exactly as you describe in a recent article, continually run people down and fault-find and nag both my husband and my children, and make endless rows but never with anyone whom I feel to be a stronger character than

## A reader's confession

myself. *How, oh how* can I conquer this, as willpower seems to be no good and I find myself again and again making scenes and creating a thoroughly unhappy home life, and I do so *long* for a happy home. This, coupled with various fears which I am constantly having to fight, makes life sheer *hell*.

All the time I find myself saying to myself, how will this affect *me*, how shall *I* enjoy this, what do *I* feel like, but *never, never*, how is my behaviour affecting others, or what can I do to make others happy? I seem always to be taking a negative instead of a positive attitude towards life and seem very unwilling to accept what can't be altered.

I do so long to be cured but *how* is another matter. I feel I have read every book there is on Psychology and seem to have got no further, but your articles have for the first time given me a glimmer of light.

Yours truly,  
Mrs. X.

Please may I accept your challenge, Mrs. X, and take your problem seriously for once? I do not suggest a further tedium of psycho-analysis, nor the spiritual meanness of barbiturates, either. I do not want to know any more about you, because I think I know enough. Your problem is not only yours. it is ours, and the world's also.

There is something in yourself you want to change. First, then, you must make your diagnosis and find out exactly what is wrong; and next you must accept your fault, whatever it may be, however much you may dislike it. You see, you are like a traveller who wants to go to Edinburgh: you must start from here, now. Where you are now is the beginning of the journey which you want to make. If you are in Bournemouth, you cannot start from London. If you are in the wrong, you must be willing to start from there.



## A reader's confession

Quite seriously, then, let's consider what is wrong with you, Mrs. X. Let's make a diagnosis and so define your starting point. Would you please first consider your basic attitude to life, by which I mean towards the problems and frustrations by which you have been—but inevitably—faced? You find that there is something wrong somewhere—a fault in your child, your husband or your home. (There always is!) There's dirt on the carpet you've just swept, he's late for his meal again and the pudding has boiled over on the stove, all as if it is done to annoy you just when you are in a hurry. So you chase it with a chopper, figuratively speaking, to put your wrong world right. (But, indeed, sometimes your words are like choppers.) You demand an instant change and call for action, now! Or else—if not before?—the blow will fall! Without meaning to be rude, would you admit that your attitude to life is that of a tyrant, who is constantly bedevilled by the compelling tyranny of all the things that you must do, if you are to get through your endless chores? You must, I must, they must: indeed everybody *must* and there is compulsion everywhere, until the soul itself is racked at the behest of the violent machinery of *things*.

"Willpower seems to be no good." No, not unless you have the money to buy another's obedience, or some sufficient threat of blackmail with which to terrify another's weakness and insecurity. Power only works as long as it is overwhelming. Is not that what you want—overwhelming power? "I never try it on with someone stronger than myself," you say. And again—"How can I *conquer* this?" So you *must* fight to conquer still, in spite of all the needless unhappiness and loss which you already know such wars must cause?

The first step in your treatment is no step at all. It is to accept your starting point and to admit your would-be

## A readers' confession

tyranny. 'Yes, I see I am in the wrong. I am a would-be bully, and what I have been before I shall probably be again. Habits are hard to change!' (Will it help you to start from there, Mrs. X, if you realize that we are all a bit inclined that way? It is not only your problem. It is ours. Surely it is the problem of the world now and always was?)

'Whatever can I do?' And there, of course, you go again, still at your starting point of timeless change. But let me ask this simple question, Mrs. X: *Are you not doing much too much already?* Don't you need a rest?

Fatigue is the problem of the world to-day. I don't mind betting it is Mrs. X's problem, too. Some problems solve themselves and much healing is automatic, naturally arranged, if nature is left to manage for herself. But fatigue is different. Because it leads to restlessness, it breeds activity: and then, in vicious circles, which are probably moralized so that 'I feel I ought' and 'I know I must', there follow more fatigue, more activity—and more fatigue.

So my first prescription for you, Mrs. X, is: *Take a rest.* And I don't mean just compel yourself to do nothing, which is no rest at all, and indeed may be even worse for you than chasing chores. I mean—*relax* (let yourself go), which is the positive opposite of the negative condition of activity (no, you don't slip out of my control!).

Did I hear you say "Nonsense! Don't be silly! You know I can't possibly leave my husband and the children?" Mrs. X, you'd be surprised: it would do them good to be without you for a bit, and they would learn your worth. (It would do them good, too, to be quit of your nagging for a while, but don't let's stress that point.) Try doing something 'in spite of' the compulsion of external things, and not 'because' of them. Learn how to enjoy the freedom of your own choice, instead of always trying to live as the

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would-be tyrant queen of the opposing tyranny of circumstance.

And now, Mrs. X, would you please 'treat' this patient for me: I mean, take her out and give her a treat, a thumping good time for once? You say that would be wrong, it would be selfish, and you ought not to pay so much attention to yourself? But read your own letter again, Mrs. X: you need to be as selfish as you are, but let it be positively done, so that you get some fun out of it, instead of being such a self-righteous old misery. Go away and enjoy yourself before your grinding mills of tyranny turn you to will-less pulp!

Yes, get away from it all: and then, when you are rested and relaxed, with your good humour restored, look at your life again. Now ask yourself quite honestly: Do you *want* to make the best of it? Do you really want that—more, for instance, than you want the tyranny of power by which your life has been so far manipulated? Sure? Then, Mrs. X, let's hear no more of this overwhelming power of yours to change your erring world—for good, of course! If you want to make the best of it, that is not hard. I mean, you've only got to be *willing* to make the best of it. (To chase it with a chopper until you've got it all exactly where you want it—until it slipped out again!—was very hard indeed. That got you down—or didn't it?)

I can give you two more clues, Mrs. X, for your self-treatment. The first is in regard to your attitude to time. Of course, you would say you never have enough time, and so you are always in a hurry. Time was your tyrant, chasing you—or was it the other way round, and you the tyrant chasing time? How can time be a tyrant unless we make it so? It is our 'nerves' which set up this impatient tyranny of time. Relax your nerves, rest a bit more, enjoy some

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leisure, give and take more time, and you will find that even the hands of the clock will move more slowly. Growth, which is the kind of change that matters most, needs time—and profits not at all from tyranny.

And lastly, would you care to try this 'tip'? Would you set up a perpetual watcher in your domestic sky, to keep a kindly, humorous, but critical eye on Mrs. X and all her difficult problems of relationship. *But never let your watcher interfere!* The knowledge you and I possess in varying degrees is not for dropping verbal atom bombs on errant enemies. Whatever our aims may be, they must be more patiently and peacefully pursued: for if we ever hope to make the best of our problems of personal relationship, then tyranny is barred. So whatever your watcher may discover, make sure he keeps it under his hat. (And by the way, Mrs. X, that new hat is a very important part of your treatment, on both levels!)

Do you think that this treatment would help Mrs. X? And would not treatment on similar lines go a long way towards saving our sadly distressed, sorely fatigued but dreadfully over-active world?

## 11: What is your breaking point?

*"Father came home drunk. Mother and I were in the kitchen. He wanted a meal and it wasn't ready. He chased her with a carving knife. I cowered in the corner in a frenzy. . . ." But, it often needs far less than that to make a nature split.*

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Our problem is a double one, which makes life difficult. Not only do we have to get on with one another, which is not always easy. But we also have to cope with a stranger in ourselves, an enemy within our own gates, as it were, whom we neither like nor trust. It is as if, whichever way we turn, inside or out, there is a gap between us, across which we must somehow fling a bridge over which we can communicate and sustain a relationship with the other side. The spoken or written word can jump the gap that is between us, you and me. But how am I to span the gap within myself and meet *my* other side—especially if I am afraid of it?

Perhaps the word 'between' is the most important one in any language, because it stands for the bridge across which we all must pass in life: between this moment and the next, between life and death, between you and me, and between those other parts of us which dwell within ourselves. What is going on between Russia and the U.S.A.,

## What is your breaking point?

or across the colour bar, or between the members of the Cabinet? Or between you and your parents, you and your children, you and your employees or employers? Surely the problem of life for all of us is to be found in the quality of our connecting links with one another, by means of which the separate parts may either be brought together in harmony or set apart in discord. The human problem must ever be to provide this cement of relationship, which is the link or bridge called 'love', in one of its many practical meanings. Confronted by our daily difficulties, shall we 'stick' or shall we 'split'? And if we choose to 'stick it', shall we try to fix it too tight, when all the facts are changing fast as time flows on? (To stick to the past is to split from the future, instead of living now.) Life *is* difficult, and the human problem is no easy one to solve. If we were cabbages. . . . But we are not.

Splits may be inner or outer, i.e. within myself, or between myself and another (or on a larger scale, between U.S.A. and Russia). The first point I want to make is that splits occur first *outside* myself, before they happen inside myself. To prove my point, I will offer some illustrations.

If the parents split ('broken home'), that tends to split the children *within themselves*. The home is like a ring, the purpose of which is not to bind or fix them, but to keep them together long enough to be able to sustain their own integrity and unity of purpose when they are up against the vagaries, vicissitudes and conflicting clamour of the world. When the home is divided against itself, the child may find his inner world is sundered.

But either parent may also be split in inconstant contradiction. Mother is inevitably split between her conflicting loyalties to her husband on the one hand and to her children. If her husband is ill, or asks too much of her attention, she may withdraw it from the children, leaving them

## *What is your breaking point?*

split off from her before they can be weaned. Or she may be vain, selfish or stupid. Instead of coming and going with dependable regularity, she may be quite a different person at different times, spoiling and scolding, making a fuss or neglecting at her own convenience, with neither principle nor persistence to sustain her in any consistent way of life. For the child, it is easier to have a mother who is always 'bad', than one whose riot of inconsistency leaves all in confusion. Any pattern is better than none for the child who needs some tram-lines for the safety of its earliest travelling.

Father may be a splitting factor, too. He can be very contradictory. The child's capacity for judgment is, at first at least—until it has been warped or destroyed entirely by human inconsistency—simple, clear and accurate. Children are not easily fooled by foolish parents, and they know both sides of father, even if they never have any opportunity of expressing their opinions. Why doesn't he obey his own rules? Why is he himself beyond the Law he claims to know so indisputably? Others must be considerate of him; but why does he not consider others more? (Sometimes he seems to consider everybody's children, except his own.)

Stated very briefly, here are three occasions in the experience of children which caused a split. (1) Mother did not like father, but adored her son instead. When he was nine, she cuddled him in bed every morning. "I only felt revulsion," he said; but was that true, or did he enjoy the intolerable privilege as well? (2) Another boy of seven had had his tonsils out and spent a pleasant week in hospital, where he had been made a fuss of. Impatient father, a successful business man, who has never known indecision in his life, has come to fetch him. Brassy matron: "You'll be glad to go home now, won't you, little man?" Little man, doubt-

## *What is your breaking point?*

fully, remembering grandmother at home—apart from her it's all right, but hospital has been quite fun, in spite of the pain in his throat—searches his heart for the truth of this difficult moment. "Well, I'm not sure; it's been fun here." Father, in a hurry as ever: "Come on now, make up your mind, one thing or the other. But you must stop here if you don't want to come home!" Given no time to decide, he split and went home, but he left something behind—in his mind. (3) Another small boy is present at a violent quarrel between his father and mother. He would defend his mother if he could, but how? Distraught, he sobs inconsolably. Mother, very naturally tired of all this, says "Be a man!" *What, like Father?*

Have you ever experienced a frenzy, which is the stage before a split? You are in a situation from which there is no escape, and yet you must get out. There are two alternatives from which to choose, but both are equally intolerable. There seems to be a galvanometer needle waggling frantically to and fro somewhere in the midriff until it jumps off the pin, but your whole self is involved in it. It is more than fear, more than panic even. There is a strain beyond which comes breaking point, and then—you're split. "Father came home drunk. Mother and I were in the kitchen. He wanted a meal and it wasn't ready. He chased her with a carving knife. I cowered in the corner in a frenzy." She split.

Provided the word is put in inverted commas, to show that we do not mean the physical organ of that name, would it not be true to say her 'heart' was broken? Emotionally, thereafter, she could not face any strain at all. She was a human doormat, who simply asked for trouble because she could not stand up for herself. Later she married a bully—which is not so surprising as it seems—and lived in an abyss of terror with no bridge across which she could



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meet either her neighbours or herself. Her tragedy was not once, and then resolved in suffering. Because she could not suffer the event when it occurred, her bridge system was broken, and her torment was perpetual.

But intolerable frenzy, and resultant split in some degree—can be caused by less than that. The pressure of passing exams, for a brain that is quick without much stamina; persistent cruelty or sudden shock, or frustration of a 'gift' for dancing, music, painting; or any persistent pressure in the wrong direction, will do it. Children are so sensitive, and truthful, too. With breaking point soon reached, their bridges are easily destroyed. Insincerity is not a natural gift for them. It usually comes later, as we learn conveniently to slip the leash of life's intolerable strain.

The effects of this disaster are deep and various. They are the signs of what is called 'nervous disorder' or 'obsessions'. The normal rhythm of energy systems is broken. It is as if an elastic thread, stretched to breaking, has recoiled at both ends, to vibrate disengaged. The balance is upset, with resulting instability. Stomach, heart, bladder, or speech ('stammering') may suffer, but there may be no physical signs, and the disability is then called 'functional'. Or 'simply imagination—you've only got to pull yourself together!' But how can you pull yourself together when you've been pulled apart? Indeed, I think perhaps the worst these people have to suffer is the misunderstanding and lack of sympathy, not only of friends and relatives, but of doctors, too.

The most common split is to get outside yourself in self-defence, so that you can never quite get back. In lesser degree, this is experienced in shyness, self-consciousness and self-recrimination (guilt). In some degree we all experience it in our modern civilization, when crammed heads count for so much more than sensitivity, and material

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things for more than our feelings about them. Perhaps education is partly to blame, or it may be the inevitable consequence of what civilization calls 'progress', but we are all too much outside ourselves nowadays, and outside one another, too. We are split apart, instead of being held together with the cement of that deep interior awareness, derived from sensitivity, which implies a warmth of touch without holding on. It is called love. But nowadays the heart has become lidded, and despised as soft, while greedy hands clutch at a multitude of facts, and the power which knowledge brings over more measurable things. In our untimely and intemperate world, exterior compulsion rules, instead of the happier harmony of inward growth.

Change happens in time, if it comes at all. Exterior compulsion ('You must . . . You ought') is a sign of split, and cannot cure it. The cause of conflict and quarrel between us is not that we are different, you and I, but rather that neither of us will allow enough for difference, or sufficient time for the cement of our relationship to gather deeper strength. It takes a long time to know another person; but longer still to know yourself, who must ever be your greatest stranger.

Time is not a philosophical abstraction or a mere convention of the mind. It is a peculiarly solid and inexorable reality, more real, although less tangible, than bread-and-butter to a child. Indeed, it is a most necessary form of nourishment, for growth needs time. So give them time, more time. And meanwhile sustain the relationship, pay attention and keep in common touch with the other, especially if he be an enemy, in order that the bridge may grow. Then do not occupy that bridge. It is not yours or mine, this mysterious quality of love. It is ours. Miracles happen; doors fly open and bridges span across immeasurable gulfs, when you and I can say—"Oh, I see!"

## 12: Making the best of it

"All right," we say, "I'll soon cope with that!" Or "this is getting me down. I can't cope any longer." Is life really just something to be coped with week after week — until at last death copes with us?

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We live—but not easily. Life has always been a battle, with victory for some and defeat—although it may have been disguised—for many. Perhaps life has never been easy, not even in the illusory affluence of fifty years ago. Perhaps it is not meant to be easy and never will be. However that may be, life is certainly not easy now, when you and I must cope in a constant struggle to pay the bills, signing forms, working in factory, office and field, doing the unremitting household chores, cooking and cleaning, mending and making do. "All right, I'll cope with it," we sometimes say. Or, when life gets us down, "I feel I can't cope any longer." It looks as if this word 'cope' may be important. What does it mean, and how does our 'coping' work?

In the dictionary, the word to 'cope' has three different, yet perhaps related, meanings. They are to *cover* (like caps, copes, and capes); to *engage, to do battle with*; and to *sell or drive a bargain* (horse-copers). Each of these meanings has its bearing, surely, on how you and I cope with the prob-

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lems of our lives. Sometimes we cover them up, avoiding them or pretending they are something else. Sometimes we drive a not-too-honest bargain with our enemies, swapping this for that but naturally giving away as little as possible. And only sometimes do we engage in honest battle, with the sharp lance of our will persistently directed at the heart of the problem. But sometimes, whichever way we go, we experience defeat; the problem cannot be concealed but comes upon us again even larger than before: the enemy refuses to be bought off any longer; or the problem is more than we can solve, as death itself defeats us in the end. Now we cannot cope any longer. Having done all we can—and more—having called on others to help us who have also done all they can—and more—when all help has failed us in our last extremity and nothing but despair remains, what then?

“Please tell me what to do now! You must do something? I can’t cope any more!” Well, lay down your sword and rest your tired arms. If nothing can be done about it, it’s no use going on in restless pain and futile struggling. Perhaps there is something else in life than trying to get rid of an endless succession of unpleasant obstacles? Perhaps all experience is like food for our digestion, with nothing whatsoever to be vomited? Perhaps we are meant to accept it as it comes, rough and smooth, pleasure and pain, defeat and victory? Perhaps we are not meant to choose what happens to us, but only to choose what we shall do about it, after accepting precisely what we have been given?

Look at any of the problems that confront you now, in your home, your work, or in the world at large. Your son is not doing as well as you had hoped at school. Your daughter comes home later than you think she should, and you don’t like the boys she meets. Your wife does not

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understand you. Your husband is making himself attractive to another woman and neglecting you. Your boss has promoted someone else and passed you over. The Government takes so much of your money that you cannot pay your bills. The Russians have the atomic bomb and the Communists have occupied Canton. Now cope with that lot, and surely those are only a few of the many disasters that are threatening to overwhelm you. For instance, added to them all, you might be ill.

But come on, *cope*! Cover up your problems and pretend they are not there—but you've done that already. Give way, sell out, strike a bargain—but you've done that, too. Give battle, draw your sword, tell them where they step off, this is the last straw and you will have no more nonsense. This is the end! Ah, but is it? If your efficiency in battle has proved effective and you are on the winning side, well and good for you. But what are the casualties—who has lost, and who is dead?

You have been coping with your problem as if it were a ball of material in your hands or at your feet, to be moulded as you wanted it, or to be kicked into goal. I question your efficiency in a practical way; but more fundamentally, I question your authority to treat life so disrespectfully.

Some of my readers have suggested in the plainest terms that I have missed the point. They claim that the answer to life's problems is quite simple—love will do the trick. But what is love? If God is love, then there is more in God and love than you and I will ever understand. If our aim in loving another person ('kindness') is to avoid their suffering, if in fact love is only a bigger and better anaesthetic, then that is certainly not God's aim as proved by our experience. Surely love should not take the guts out of life? It should provide the courage to endure. Love is

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not a means of escaping from experience, but the meaning of experience itself.

Mrs. T had lost her child in very tragic circumstances. She grieved. Her husband, her mother and her friends all loved her and tried, in their different ways, to rid her of her grief. It hurt them to see her suffer, and so "Don't cry!" they said. She should snap out of it, and they took her to parties and the pictures, and made her play golf in order to forget her grief. When she became still more depressed and could not sleep, she came to a psychologist. What did he do? He simply put her through it—exactly how, when and why the child was burnt, how she took him to the hospital and sat beside his bed until he died, exactly how she felt and why she blamed herself. Together, they probed and cleaned her wounded heart until it healed itself. Avoiding nothing, she suffered the tragedy of her experience to the full, in unremitting measure. Whose was the greater love—and what the healer?

Life does not reveal itself in such apparent tragedy to all of us. Of course, we are right to guard ourselves and those we love from all the pain we can. But when stark tragedy befalls, there is only one way to make the best of it. It is to be willing to enter the dark door of death itself and plumb the depth of the abyss which only such disaster can reveal. Experience of tragedy is not something to go *over*, or *round*, or *under*—when it comes it is simply and undefendedly to be gone *through*. Then healing comes and in ourselves we are something greater than we were before. Love is no antidote to pain for sentimentalists. It is no pale panacea for helping cowards to avoid reality. It is not a convenient little word for lesser minds to grasp for easy comfort. It is not the kind of thing that we can boss around,

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controlling it with petty tyranny. Love is as large as life and can be just as tragic.

We need to reconsider our whole attitude to life, as to what we can do for the best and when it is better to do nothing. This is especially true in regard to the problem of leadership. The exercise of unquestioned leadership is a tempting privilege that offers rich rewards in the home, in the factory, in the city, in the professions, and in the world. Undoubtedly, it gets things done, quickly and smoothly. Against that fact there is no argument. Unfortunately, it depends for its success upon its being unquestioned. But questioned it will be, for life itself is such an open question. Tyranny will only work with full efficiency in a mechanical state in which all life is dead.

We know that the world is sick from too much tyranny. We object to tyranny in principle—and yet in practice we except our own, which somehow seems different. (if we recognize it for what it is it always seems either justifiable or else inevitable.) But what can take the place of tyranny? What is the alternative? What other way of life is possible, except that of winning battles by defeating enemies and of getting things done by force, actual or implied? What other goal can life offer except bigger and better prizes, like carrots beyond the donkey's nose to make him move along?

Some people manage to live without a tyrant always getting at them to drive them along. There *are* peaceful, happy homes without a tyrant there. There *are* factories and offices where employers and employed can work in harmony. What would you say it is that makes the difference, that makes the best instead of the worst of it? What matters most if we are to make the best of life?

What would you put first: *freedom from tyranny*, from all interference, benevolent or otherwise? Yes, and as a

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corollary to that I would add—liberty of choice, a maximum of responsibility for everyone in his own sphere, which derives from the practice of decentralization. What then? Next I would place the satisfaction of being one of the family, a trusted member of a community, a needed part however small within the complex whole. And then I would take the word *contentment*, by which I would express the essence of the art of happiness, which is to be willing to be contained within your lot and limitations, making the best of it from right inside. Contentment has a childlike quality of being willing to be no more and no less than we really are.

We are inside the ball of life, and go too far afield when we get outside it, kicking it around. We are like children, still within the womb of life. We are stronger in our weakness than we realize, and only make ourselves weaker when we assume a tyrant's powers. There is more in life than the meanness of always being on the right side. We are all in this together, and recent wars have made it plain that every victor must also be upon the victim's side.

In the long run victory is not won by destroying our problems, but by living through them: not by altering our circumstances, but by our willingness to dwell in them: not by our desire to change our children, our husbands, wives or neighbours, but again by our willingness to live with them and amongst them: and, if tragedy comes our way, not by avoiding it but by suffering it to the full until it has been transcended. The victory of life is won when we can accept the total stream of our experience, in joy and sorrow, success and failure, sickness, suffering and even death—and still go on. That is more than coping with the business of living. It is the art of life, and in the long run the most efficient way to make the best of it.



### 13: What is claustrophobia?

*"I must get out of here!" That is the feeling of the claustrophobe: the need to break out—at whatever cost. And this feeling can apply inside a human relationship, such as marriage, just as much as in the confined space of a tube-lift. Is there any answer we can give the sufferer?*

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Several correspondents have written asking about 'claustrophobia'. I am glad to write about it, because I believe it is a more important subject to us all than we realize, as I hope to show. Not all of us suffer from it in the text-book sense, and yet, in some degree, I think it is a problem for us all.

Text-books define claustrophobia as a *morbid dread of closed spaces*. You know the sort of thing: they cannot travel in trains without a corridor (especially underground); they must sit on the end seat in cinema or church, so that they can get out; they hate being in a crowd, 'trapped'. The reaction is instinctive, total, absolute. Reason does not come into it. The whole being is possessed as by a silent scream or yell: *"I must get out of here!"* If you have felt that way, you know what hell it is. If you have not, I doubt if you can imagine the agony of such an instantaneous

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compulsion when it cannot be immediately satisfied. The only solution seems to be avoidance—stop at home!

But this compulsion is not only experienced about material space, like small crowded rooms and underground trains. The same compulsion “I must get out of here!” also applies, for instance, to jobs in which the worker feels that he is trapped. He goes from job to job, and may prefer to be a tramp in his compulsive escape from any confinement—which is all right as long as he does not find himself in prison. (Can you imagine what *that* must be like, if you have claustrophobia and there is no escape? But there is—by suicide.) The same compulsive demand for freedom from the oppressive ring also applies to the discipline of marriage. So homes are broken up in our search for freedom from unconscious stress.

I will tell you first about Mrs. T, because she really was shut in a cupboard as a child, in such circumstances as to condition fear, enough to make all subsequent confinement seem an intolerable threat. All too literally, she had a frightful shock. As a child of between five and seven, she suffered from night terrors, which are not uncommon. She said it was like being swirled by immense forces in darkness over a bottomless abyss of terror into which she was being sucked. It was very real to her, and she had nothing in herself with which to meet it. She awoke yelling the place down, and her mother, who was never very patient, would try her best to comfort her. But one night her father thought it time to put the pressure on. He'd stop it, once and for all—as indeed he did, much too successfully. He took her mother's place beside the screaming child. He said, “Stop it!” but she did not. He said, “Stop it, or I'll beat you with this slipper!” She did not and he did—but still she did not stop. He said, “If you don't stop

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it at once I'll lock you in the airing cupboard!" Again, she did not, and he did, leaving her there in the dark to bang the door down in her frenzy if she could.

She was rescued, limply sobbing, by her mother an hour later. She had no more night terrors, of which her father was very pleased to have cured her so successfully. But she was a lifelong sufferer from claustrophobia, which is not surprising. She also suffered perpetually from what the doctors called 'gastro-enteritis', but they could never cure her of it. It was as if she was eating up her own inside in perpetual self-destruction. She also ran out of her marriage, to wreck her life. So her father's drastic remedy, although apparently successful, proved to be rather an expensive cure.

In seeking 'causes' to account for such 'effects', however, we must not over-simplify. Probably some of those who have been shut in cupboards do *not* suffer from claustrophobia thereafter; and certain it is that thousands who suffer from it have never been shut in cupboards, or indeed suffered from any unusual experience of confinement.

With Miss P, her symptoms started in school assembly when she was thirteen. She said she simply 'conked out'—without any warning. She would flop unconscious on the floor, to be carried out into the air where swift recovery would follow, and she would resume her class-work, apparently none the worse. Sometimes she would have what she called a 'blurred' feeling, but would not actually faint. It became more frequent as she grew older. She would be in church, when suddenly the parson would become indistinct, she would feel 'disconnected' and think, "Am I really *here*?" It spread to concerts, crowds, underground trains, and then to all travelling. She felt better with someone else, but became increasingly crippled by it until her

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life was paralysed by this uncontrollable experience of terror. Searching the past for the cause to account for this disastrous effect, the only thing that she could discover was the fact that, as a child, her mother always seemed to be 'on top of her', with so much talk—talk—talk, crackling and booming over her head which she could not understand. She felt, "If only I could find some peace and get away!" And so she did: but, as so often happens, our unconscious device for improving the intolerable situation leaves matters worse, not better, than they were before.

Disease of any kind is a deviation from the normal. It is not a separate condition on its own, 'wrong in its own right' as it were. Indeed, it should never be regarded as being so simply wrong, because it is always at least partly right. There is always a 'good idea' behind it; but, like many another good idea, it is too partial and impatient in its operation to be of benefit to the whole organism in the long run. Of course, 'freedom from' pain or fear is a good idea; escape from a dangerous situation is a good idea; peace untouchable by provocation is a good idea; victory assured over all our enemies by any means is a good idea. Well, you can't deny it, they are all very good ideas, aren't they? It is not that they are unobtainable; these good ideas can all be enjoyed by every one of us *if we can only faint*. And claustrophobia is nothing but an unsuccessful faint. That is to say, it is an attempt on the part of the tenant to vacate the house, leaving it empty. This may be an ignoble victory, but it is victory none the less—because, my pursuers, you can capture my house but you can't catch me! (Think, for instance, of the man in the Resistance Movement on the run from his pursuers. It mattered not if they found his house empty, as long as they did not catch him!)

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We must always assume something as our primary hypothesis. Let me ask you a straightforward question: are you prepared to agree that you yourself are a kind of centre-in-circle, I-in-me, soul-in-body or tenant-in-house arrangement? Let us assume that you are agreed to that proposition in theory. But as a matter of fact are you agreed to it in practice? That is to say, are you agreed to a primary situation of factual imprisonment from which you are willing not to escape even if you can? (Because you can escape. You know you can escape from everything—even perhaps from death itself—simply by not being there. Or, alternatively, by insisting that your objectionable situation must change, here and now—someone else must do it for you, if you cannot do it yourself. Or again, you can always pretend that things are different from what they are. Or you can live in hope that they will be one day. . . . Oh yes, we can get out of *anything*.) But are you prepared to stop in the house, patiently, faithfully, cheerfully, with the word WELCOME on the mat to show your willingness to accept who and what may come to visit you?

If you are, I can tell you how to cure your claustrophobia, for good and all. It is quite simple, although it needs some patient practice. But if you are not prepared to accept my axiom that there is no escape ever that isn't worse in the long run than your present discomfort; if you insist that you can and must find some way out of your predicament, if not this one then that one, if not now then later, and if you must keep this matter of your soul's salvation in your own hands and within your own control; then I cannot help you. You must find a leader who is as hopeful as you are yourself that he can find your promised land for you. As far as I am concerned, your promised land is here, or nowhere: now, or never. Your present house, your present lot and situation, is promising enough,

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if you will only dwell in it with all you are. (You see, really it is the tenant who holds the promise—not the house.)

(1) *Understanding*. This is no blind cure. Either you can say, "Oh, I see!" or you cannot. If you can, you are half-way to cure already. If you cannot see yet, perhaps you will later. You will know when you do see, because when you do you will laugh at yourself like anything. You will have turned round on your own axis, topsy-turvy—but you will, in fact, be right way up, for once. Oh yes, our self-saving antics, tragic as they must be in their disastrous consequences, have their funny side. (This laugh-in-the-right-place is an important part of our cure.)

(2) *Willingness* is not the same as resignation. It has to be positive not negative. Saying to yourself, "Well, here I am," as you settle down in the crowded underground train does not mean that you are going to enjoy yourself—yet. You must be willing to experience the discomfort of your own feelings whatever they may be. They are part of the furniture of your house and are not to be dismissed or avoided. It is more important for you to stay within your own feelings than it is for you to stay in the train. (There is nothing wrong with the train. Remember that your only trouble is that your house is liable to be tenantless. But you are the tenant and so—stay where you belong.)

(3) *Now let yourself go*. There is a lot more in this than you will understand at first. Negatively, it means don't try to take care of yourself. It means: let the pursuer get you, whoever or whatever he is. It means: stop imagining what is going to happen and wait to see what actually does happen. Let it happen. (My favourite Chinese proverb: *When about to be ravished, relax and look your best*.)

(4) *Relax*. Here is something physical for you to pay attention to, which will take your mind off yourself, your fears and your feelings. Breathe out—out—out, until your

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lungs are quite empty. Heave three big sighs, and feel yourself relax. Relax every limb, every muscle, every part of yourself, in detail.

(5) *Distinguish between the tenant and the house, and keep the tenant in the house.* This is self-discipline of a most practical kind, but it needs constant and perpetual practice until it becomes automatic and habitual. You will find that everything that you can see or know, feel or imagine, know or do, is part of the house. As tenant, your house is all for your enjoyment but it is not yourself. Now can you enjoy yourself?

## 14: What are the facts of life?

*Are 'the facts of life' capable of plain and easy statement? Should any parent or teacher be able to put them—perfectly naturally—in front of any child? Or are our own doubts and hesitations justified by the deep mystery of the subject which we demand should be so 'plainly stated?'*

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In my childhood I was told nothing of the 'facts of life'. I grew up in frightened ignorance of the mysteries of sex, carrying for years a needless burden of guilt and anxiety. Yet, somehow, in spite of mistakes and false starts, my life has not worked out too badly. On the whole, there have been many compensations. It is probable, for instance, that the darkness and discomfort of my early ignorance has played a large part in my subsequent search for knowledge, truth and light. Looking back, I can see how different life might have been if I had known. But it might have been much worse, and ignorance often finds itself mysteriously guarded against dangers into which knowledge falls in spite of open eyes. It makes me shudder now to think what might have happened if anyone had tried to put me right when I was wrong. Indeed, I am much more frightened of the ill-effects of misguided good intentions than I am of any of the more direct dangers of experience with which



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life besets our path. Rightly or wrongly, I can simply report the fact—I am, as I have always been, afraid of saviours.

In my early training as a psychologist, I often heard about the 'facts of life': how, when and what the child should be told, at school and home. To some, it seemed, these facts stood out quite clear, and all good children ought to know them. To others, it seemed, it was quite easy: you simply told children all about it—they then knew. But in my secret heart, I always felt in sympathy with parents and teachers who, both shirking their uneasy task, left it to the other, so that it was left undone, with everyone to blame. The facts of life, so plain to some, were never plain to me. I must confess that to me life and sex have always been, and still remain, a mystery.

When we had children of our own, my wife, who is very sensible, announced quite plainly: no psychology in this house! She was not going to have any nonsense of that kind with the upbringing of her children. However, we went on the line that all questions fairly asked should be as fairly answered, no more, no less. We laid no needless burdens on their infant minds, and I was impressed by the easy way in which the children took the answers they received. It really did not seem to matter much to them whether children were born under gooseberry bushes, whether the stork brought them, or whether—surely the least likely to be true?—they popped somehow out of a ridiculously small hole in mother's body. The great thing was to keep it light and cheerful, and to let them play with the problem, in their own minds, year after year perhaps asking the same questions, as their imagination required in its development.

In many ways, our children were lucky. As we lived on

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a farm, they were able to gather many of the 'facts of life' straight from their experience of what went on within the barns. (Their deductions were not, however, always accurate. One morning we were seated at lunch, Daughter, aged eight, arrived rather late. Son, aged five: "Why are you late, where have you been?" Daughter: "Watching them do the pigs. I was looking through a big crack in the barn. They didn't half squeal!" Son: "What do you mean—what were they doing to the pigs?" Daughter, with a superior air: "Oh, you know, that operation all boys have!" So must we learn from experience—but how shockingly inaccurate our deductions from our limited supplies of experience must sometimes be!)

I suppose by the time he went to his public school, the boy had heard most things that he could understand discussed naturally from most angles in the course of everyday conversation. However, I felt my responsibility heavy on my shoulders. Surely, now when he was going to his public school, this was the time for me to tell him the 'facts of life'? So I took him for a walk and carefully guided our conversation where I wanted it to go. "Anything you want to know, old man?" "No thanks!" So we left it at that. It may have been all very unsatisfactory, and perhaps I neglected my obvious duty, but I believe that life, although it provides us with many traps and pitfalls for our adventuring feet, knows how to guard them, too.

Here is another story, by contrast. As stories should, it begins in the beginning, which is relevant to the end, but is long before this little actor on the stage of life was born. In the middle of the nineteenth century certain farmers in the north-west Highlands of Scotland, who found life impossibly hard after successive failures of their crops, decided to migrate to the south-west of England, where they

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settled and made good amidst a gentler stock, wherewith these tough old Highland adventurers married and settled down to reap prosperity. Such a one was William T's grandfather, whom the boy was said to resemble. But his mother came of a strict Nonconformist family. She was different: and, having failed to curb her husband's sinful tendency to find his comfort in other arms than hers, she was the more disposed to save her William from any similar misfortune. William's first memory was of his mother's tears: he soon discovered to his cost what made her cry. Every time he did what she wanted, she brightened up at once; but every time he did what he wanted for himself, she would cry and say he did not love her. This set the pattern of his childhood—to stop his mother crying; not, perhaps, entirely out of thought for her, but because it is inconvenient for any boy to be accused so constantly of making his mother cry.

Like his grandfather, William was as lusty as he was practical and adventurous. His practical side found it expedient to go to chapel with his mother twice on Sundays, with Sunday school as well in the afternoon. But it was also the same practical matter-of-factness that enabled him to find employment for his natural curiosity in matters of sex from a very early age. His mother said he had the devil in him sometimes and continued to weep, but less frequently, over her son's misdeeds, because he became increasingly clever at concealing them. He first found himself in public trouble at the tender age of six. He sent a note of surprising frankness and maturity to a little girl in his class, which she, having primly read, promptly marched up through the class and handed to the teacher. William's subsequent distrust of women dated from that moment; as also his decision in future to keep his love affairs a secret at all cost! The teacher did her best to put an end to all

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such nonsense, once and for all. She did not weep, as his mother would have done; but she dealt justly, summarily and publicly with the offence, according to her lights.

Thereafter William split: he lived two lives. He continued to go to church with his mother and, to defend himself from her tears, he took care that she should never know what went on within his secret life. He knew that sex was sin, because he had learnt from experience that indeed it was so. So he sinned; never very happily, but quite consistently and with much-needed inner satisfaction. In due course, William married—to discover that he could never enjoy his sex-experience within the licence of his marriage bed. Yes, he loved his wife: but that was not sex, which he must find elsewhere. And so the very thing occurred in William's life which his mother had been so deplorably anxious to avoid. Distressed by the compulsion of his infidelities, he drank to ease his conscience and to forget his mother's—and now also his wife's!—tears. But does it not often happen that our very anxiety to avoid a certain disaster determines our ultimate and unavoidable collision with it?

To be presumptuous in our claim that knowledge is power is very typical of human pride and frailty. Therefore, glibly—but still frightened children in the dark, behind the scenes?—we assume that in this important matter of our sex-experience there *ought* to be some facts, we *ought* to know what they are, and knowing them, we *ought* to be able to control our own behaviour (or at least the behaviour of others, which always seems much easier). The repetition of that word *ought*, however, which I have underlined, suggests that this manner of approach is not so simply scientific and altruistic as it seems.

I suggest that some of the facts of life are these: that life

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and sex are both in their very nature essentially a mystery which knowledge, going so far but never all the way, should never attempt to confine or control; that 'luck' and 'accident' are needed parts of the adventure of experience; that there is no final security, the attempt to find it being itself exceedingly dangerous; that human persons have problems in their sex relations for which the happier habits of the flowers and animals illustrated in our hand-books of sex education give no true analogy whatever; and that when it comes to the facts of life which you try to pass on to your children with so much—I suggest, very proper—embarrassment, you are faced with one of these three possible alternatives: (1) you do not know what they are yourself; (2) your children already know more about it than you do (Mother, you'd be surprised!); or (3) even if you do know, it is quite impossible to tell them because they cannot understand what you mean without your experience, which is the one thing they must not have—yet.

If that seems to be rather gloomy and negative, a little more can be said on the positive side: First, we learn the facts of life, not from glib words, but from our actual experience in our own homes as children. (And how often the words we hear are contrary to our experience!) Second, all sex instruction begins from the day the baby is born. The attitude to sex is largely conditioned by the moral solemnity—or otherwise—of mother and nurse in regard to early excretory habits. A sufficient discipline of habit is good for life; but excessive righteousness without the lightness of a sense of humour (always our greatest safeguard against all disaster?) is bad at this or any other stage of life.

And finally, there is more in sex than carnal pleasure, more than sociology, biology, scientific psychology or moral expediency can ever know or define. There is al-

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ways something God-like in it, even in its most sordid travesty. Its latent ecstasy is all beyond our measuring, however clever we may be at catching it in contraceptives. Here lowest and highest, human and divine, light and shadow, man and woman meet in glory or decay, or somewhere in between.

Given so much, it is quite certain that we have not made the best of it. Beauty and joy can be so easily destroyed by our stupidity and clumsiness. But, hazarding a guess that is at least based on much experience of needless human woe, I would say unhesitatingly that in this matter more harm has been done in the long run by the 'good' folk than the bad 'uns.

## 15: Mother; girl-friend; wife

*If Mother gave so much to us, why should any other woman give less? And if Mother did not give, then surely we are right to try to get our own back? So begins the attempt to secure from another woman — or women — all that Mother ought clearly to have given us, and didn't.*

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“And so they married and lived happily ever after.” Some of them did—but the others. . . ? Some tried again, and even again, perhaps; some settled down to stick it out and make the best of it, and some found in the end more happiness than they ever thought was possible.

But it is a pity that marriage should be sentimentalized and that fantasy should abolish fact in this dual adventure. For marriage is at least an adventure into the unknown; it is a gamble for high stakes and none can tell the winner before the race is run. But it is more than that: it is our human problem dramatized, in which each couple married are brought face-to-face with the very facts of life itself. For in life we find that living forces are opposed, one set in mortal conflict with the other. The human problem is to turn this conflict into co-operation, so that the opposing forces may work together, each reciprocal to the other, like a great engine in the perfect timing of its

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rhythm. But at first, like clumsy dancers, we fall over each other's feet as well as our own.

It is easy to see the pattern of this relationship between the sexes, but hard to make it work. The same pattern of 'marriage' is set three times over. For those who are interested in the background of our human problem, a mysterious marriage is seen in the relationship between the Godhead and mankind, Christ and His Church, or the spiritual and material worlds. (This may be hard for all to understand, yet some believe it to be simply true. It is, in fact, why the human ceremony is called a 'sacrament', standing as it does for this deeper transcendental union between the opposites.) The same pattern is set again within each one of us, both man and woman, for each one of us also has this dual, bisexual nature within ourselves. Here also conflict is the rule, and we are set the same most intimate and subtle problem of discovering the right relationship between our opposing, disunited, halves. Then there is marriage with our mate, to dramatize the same problem for us in our outward partnership with our opposite number in the exterior world. So is life dramatized for us in parallel, as it were, three times over, and from its deepest problems no one, whether married or not, can for long escape without a price.

What is this pattern, then, that is impressed so deeply into the structure and process of life? I saw it when in India in the 'lingam' worn so often round the neck of the Hindu, which we all thought rather rude and decadent. This fertility symbol was as simple as a bit of stick in a ring and represented the male and female sex organs interlocked. But I see this pattern now as far more than the symbol of the sexual embrace between lovers. I see it as the pattern of life itself, engaged in its ceaseless process of creation. I see it as the battle between giant opposing



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forces, positive and negative, making and destroying, light and dark. I see it as the relationship between the stream and its banks, the air and our lungs, the ploughshare and the field. I see it as the mystery of the incarnation and the Virgin birth, in which the love of God for all His world is dramatized for man. By the 'word' thus spoken, the stick of the divine message again strikes through the ring of our humanly resistant consciousness, so that the truth of life for mankind is realized—in Christ. In fact, I see this bloody battle that may become a rhythmic dance of joy presented always, everywhere. And, of it all, our own personal marriage is the epitome. It is our share in the whole divine-human process, our chance to enter the battle, to join the dance and help to solve the problem, with all that it contains of confusion, foolishness, magnificence and the mad heroism of sacrificial love.

Motherhood is natural, and on that level I do not rank it very high. Mother earth, mother nature, your mother and mine, were there in our beginning to sustain, nourish and comfort us, until we could sustain ourselves. Thus our mother gave us her body from which to make our body independent, for which we owe her a great debt, even though it is 'only natural' that she should do so much for us.

This primary condition of being born of her, part of her, nourished and comforted by her (but more or less, according to our 'luck' of birth), is, of course, immensely important subsequently, because it determines much of our unconscious attitude to life, to women in general and especially to wife in particular. If Mother gave so much to us, why should we ever expect any other woman to give less? And if she did not, surely we are right to try to get our own back, and to receive from some other woman

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that due which our own mother did not give? We all learn from our experience, and this first experience of infancy, being deepest laid of all our 'knowledge', has the most powerful effect subsequently upon our attitude to life, particularly because it has been forgotten. Yes, we want wife to be like Mother, either the same or better. But wife will be mother, too—and, alas, not ours! So all husbands see the love they want for themselves given lavishly to their children, and feel themselves neglected. Here is great cause for jealousy, which is better recognized and experienced than repressed, disguised or diverted.

But Mother is no proper resting place. She is a cave for exit, barred against return. The latency period of emotional readjustment is a long one, lasting past adolescence. Then comes a succession of girl-friends, whose job is gradually to complete our training for the final trial of marriage.

Mother was, at first at least, the kind of person whom we could control. We called, she came; we asked, she gave; we cried, she comforted us. With Mother, when we pulled the cord the bell rang and she was ours—at first. But if the latency period of our development has done its work, we should now realize that the girl-friend is not on a string and that she is not under our control. She is learning to be independent, too. She has her own problems, her own fish to fry, her own desires and fears, her own pride and selfishness. So the fun begins, and the sooner we learn that this is not Mother any more, the more fun we shall have, and the more we shall learn of the ways of women from our experience of girl-friend.

So the job of girl-friend is to teach us to do without Mother and to strike a new, more adult, masculine and forthright note. Let's dance together, until we fall more

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seriously in—or out—of love. For this is the great advantage of a girl-friend, that we can change her for another if we want to, or even enjoy for a spell the peace of more bachelor joys, away from all the charms of woman.

Girl-friends are easy. They are fun, and when we are tired of them, away they go! They are therefore very poor teachers, really, for the heavier tasks of matrimony, from which there is no such swiftly irresponsible escape. So perhaps when we are married we shall look backwards longingly to easier days when life was smoother than it is to-day—from girl-friend back to Mother, and from wife back to girl-friend.

There is much akin to madness and the state of dream about falling in love. It is real enough, Heaven knows, to be completely and utterly absorbing; but it is not the reality of the multiplication table, of scientific fact or the objective steadiness of things as they stand measurable in the real external world. It is quite another reality of imagination and poetry, and the glory of those gods and goddesses who lived in the Golden Age of wondrous joy and innocence. Of course, it is real in that deep, interior way, whence inner values have been projected like a living cinema, totally to obscure the comparative unimportance of mere drab exterior form. "Whatever can he see in her?" we say. The answer is that he is not even looking at her, herself, but that she is reflecting back to him the luminous images of living personal wonder which have sprung from hidden depths within himself. She is his 'dream-girl', and he is 'madly' in love with her. Indeed, how true! And yet we need not be cynical, for the values that he sees in her are her real values, but potentially. They are her secret worth, her soul and nakedness revealed. But how will such values wear in time and stress of circumstance? Will her potential worth ever become realized and proved upon the

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anvil of experience? Falling in love is Paradise. Will it be lost? And if it is lost, will it ever be regained?

As work is to play, so marriage is to all that has preceded it. Marriage is, for both partners to the contract, the business of living for which all that has gone before is but partial and inadequate training. That was fun, but this is serious.

I am neither a pessimist nor an optimist about marriage. I am, I hope, a realist. I believe in the magic, the mystery and the miracle of love, which is at least part, and perhaps the most important part of love's reality; I believe that love is Heaven-sent, Heaven-inspired and Heaven-guided. In fact, I believe in Heaven, although I know that we are not there now. We are on earth, and need to keep our feet on the ground for a long time yet.

Therefore there is much work to do for those who marry—at home and in the office, too, but not least with one another. Wife is not mother to her mate, but to her children (though if she is wise she will find time to mother him a little, too!). Wife is not girl-friend any longer (except perhaps occasionally—but should we take another off the queue of willing ones when she is not?). Wife is her man's problem confronting him here and now, in all the varying moments of their life together. She is his shadow—opposite, opposed. She is his other part, his counterpart, his other self—as he is also hers. For in marriage, in time, we meet not only all the other, but also—which is often much more hard to bear!—the whole of our own selves. That is why marriage, when taken honestly, is complete fulfilment. But although it is very hard to be honest with one another, it is harder still to be honest with the would-be rejected aspect of ourselves.

If marriage is, in fact, so serious and difficult a business, then it should be realized for the great adventure which

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it is, and taken seriously. Successful marriage requires our deep devotion to, and concentration upon, the basic values for which it stands. These are the heavenly ones of Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Love, which marriage brings to earth, there to dwell in our own homes for our abiding joy—if we will do the work that must be done to keep them there.

Of course, we can escape from our own destiny. Of course, we can look for mother or girl-friend elsewhere. Of course, we can blame wife for not being what she is not, and beat her with angry words, or boil inwardly in secret bitterness. Of course, we can give up the unequal battle as a bad job, and take to clubs or pubs for our material (or is it maternal?) comfort, or we can sink ourselves in work or making money. Of course, we can sidestep our problem, in grief or grievance, illness or hard work.

But—in the long run—is it worth it? If life is Law and we are bound within to be ourselves, with full responsibility each for our own becoming, is it not probably wiser to stay within the ring, rather than to hope to change it every time it pinches? Anyway, I am quite sure, however we decide to play our part, that life—like marriage—is going to be difficult. But I think in the end that it is easier for the realist who, seeing through it, sees it through.

## 16: A cure for violence?

*Violence is — they say — increasing. How can it be decreased? By more violence, of course, say a number of distinguished people, including some most learned judges. But is the answer quite so simple? Does more added to one side or the other ever produce a smaller total?*

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“I only want a bit of peace!” as the man said when he hit his wife on the head with the poker. The manner of his request may seem illogical, but it is nevertheless not uncommon, even in the highest circles. Judges who advocate return to flogging also want a bit of peace, for society and themselves. But it is at least doubtful whether the poker or the ‘cat’ are the best remedy for those who would disturb the peace we so much need and long for. “I only want” is such a simple start—but it may lead to violence or sudden death, whether it is initiated by ruthless thug or severe judge, anxious child or pious parent, bad-tempered husband or impatient wife. “I only want. . . .” Yes, even if what I want seems a good thing in itself—like peace, love or security—it is on the high road to crimes of violence, because it leaves out all that we do not want, such as time, labour, and the rights of other people.

Any paper, any day, will offer evidence enough of the

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prevalence of crimes of violence. Here are two examples, drawn at random from one daily paper.

"Two young car bandits attacked and robbed a ninety-two-year-old woman yesterday. She was five feet tall, taking her morning walk. Her black bag contained ten shillings, her old-age pension, and a gold watch of sentimental value. One man jumped out, knocked her down, grabbed her bag and ran back to the car, which drove off. . . ."

"A boy of fifteen set a house on fire and caused the death of three women. In a statement, he said he broke into the house but could find no money, so in a fit of temper he set fire to some papers and went home to bed. He was awakened by his mother's voice saying that three women had been burnt to death. He said that he felt sorry and ashamed, but went back to sleep. . . ."

In each case, "I only wanted . . ."—well, what everybody else had got! Surely, it seemed, I ought to have it now? Thus morality and violence make easy bed-fellows. Alike in judge and criminal, parent and child, it seems as if a good idea *ought* to be all right if it is immediately put into action—the sooner the better.

We live in a world of threatened H and atom bombs (only to be used, of course, when morality dictates); of jet-propelled 'Venoms' and 'Lightnings' (and how mechanically marvellous they are). Our youngsters often go several times a week to cinemas, to see murder and sudden death extolled for entertainment. And, remember, there has been a war, when bigger and better bombs were beautiful, at least if they fell upon our enemies. Yes, violence is in the air with a vengeance. The common games of children are of gangster hold-ups. The commonest drawings of children who choose their own subjects are of guns and aeroplanes, of bombs, of violence and sudden death. So crimes of vio-

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lence are not an isolated problem, to be put down as ruthlessly as they occur. Humanity at large is somehow on the loose. Even in its best aspirations for the good life, it is out of touch with the needed discipline of time and growth.

What is violence? Let us start from the simple statement that life of any kind is harnessed energy. In all living things, power is marvellously imprisoned within the instrument of its expression so that, suitably resisted, the energy is harmlessly released through the medium of proper form, wherein it lives and dies in the discipline imposed by time. When the 'harness' fails to impose the needed restriction or discipline upon energy, then violence occurs. Thus all talk of freedom, which implies freedom from discipline, is dangerous to the hard-won stability of social and personal patterns, as history has always proved. Freedom is either the acceptance of the disciplines imposed by life, or else it is simply—violence. So let us beware of too much talk of freedom.

When does violence occur? That is to say, when does our proper harness fail to keep our necks within the collar of needed discipline? There are many answers to this important question and it will be seen that this is no simple matter of curbing the ill-will of those with bad intention. The would-be-good may sometimes be as violent as the couldn't-care-less bad.

(1) *Fatigue* may lead to violence, as witness the 'worn-out' nerves of the impatient, irritable mother who, distraught by the constant demands and frustrations of her existence, 'nags' her husband and children who seem to do all they do with intention only to annoy her.

(2) There is a sickness of the mind we call *hysteria*, which is apt to express itself in violence because its mood is not the disciplined positive of willingness, but the compulsive



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negative of 'Get away!' It is as if the central core of self has slipped from positive to negative, from willingness to won't, becoming as we say 'beside itself', destructive either of itself or all that stands in its way. It is not only elephants who 'run amok'. Pressed beyond a certain point, wives or children, soldiers (and even husbands) may.

(3) *Either too much or too little authority* may lead to violence. The purpose of authority, inside and out, is to balance impulse, representing the law imposed by time and growth, and by the rights and needs of others. The impulsive energy of children needs this proper harnessing, or else they go all 'hay-wire' with impulses undirected and energy undisciplined. But either too much or too little authority may 'spoil' the child. Too much leads to resistance and brings out the protective rebellion of 'I won't'. Too little lets impulse rip, as rip it will if not set upon the tramlines of some rightful discipline.

Learning from example, as all children must, they catch the mood of their home by quick infection. Therefore violence at home or school—and there are other kinds of impatience than that exhibited in a 'good thrashing'—must inculcate its own response of violence again, though it may be disguised as virtue. For it is possible to pursue the path of violence in opposite, inverted ways, such as preventing or prosecuting crime—or by reading certain Sunday papers. Or the violence may be incorporated, repressed inside the body, setting up a sickness of self-destruction where it hurts with the kind of pain that doctors have to treat, but often unsuccessfully.

(4) *Impatient ambition for the good* may seem a curious and unexpected source of violence, but perhaps it is the commonest. 'Good, better, best, never let it rest!' and the cry 'Excelsior! There's more room at the top!' are mottoes prevalent by implication in too many homes and schools.

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I believe that we are all inclined to be a bit too good, too soon, nowadays—our benevolent government included. Social virtues are fashionable to-day—but have we grown up that far? Can we be made good to order, or does such violence to the tedious facts not perhaps provide a kind of hot-bed in which the oft-sown seeds of violence will thrive?

(5) *Real 'bad-'uns'*, criminals by choice and nature, do occur. Some, I believe, are beyond the will to learn the needed discipline for their redemption. Yes, there are bad men, and women too, to whom crimes of violence come as naturally as flowers in spring. It is no use being sentimental about them, and saying, "All men are good at heart" or "Turn them over to the psychologist". Such soft thinking springs from our desire to escape the facts, and makes us criminals, too, in our avoidance of the truth. There is a reality of evil with which some of us may become identified, not always by the ills of our conditioning, but by our own free choice.

The task of justice in these matters is not easy or simple. The same crime may be committed by different persons for very different reasons. On the whole, our law-courts do their work with admirable impartiality and practical common sense, learnt in the hard school of experience. Sometimes the tendency has been for the pendulum to swing towards more vigorous punishment. To-day there is little doubt that the swing has gone too far towards leniency and soft thinking. But in our imperfect world, it can fairly be said that justice is administered in this country better than anywhere else, or at any other time in our long history.

What, then, is the remedy for violence? First, I think, to recognize that it exists in its own reality, latent within us all. Second, to realize that it is very pleasant to release

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it, as it is always pleasant to get our necks out of harness; but that it is doubly pleasing to our pent-up state if we can have the added satisfaction of being sure that our violence is not bad but *obviously good*—as it surely must be if it is so purely directed in the cause of someone else's moral benefit? In this error we are very commonly deceived, as we are willing to fall so frequently to the moral claims of every war, which must always be—but to both sides, of course—a holy one.

But violence, whether in the hands of judge or criminal, simply cannot be 'good', because obviously it is *not* good. It may be necessary as, if we are attacked by violence, it may be needful to react with some violence in self-defence to disarm the criminal. It may even be expedient to bring the young criminal up short with a salutary shock to learn his lesson. But don't let us be deceived into thinking that violence is 'good', because that it can never be. It is always 'bad', and there is something better.

The corrective to violence is not more violence, but discipline with opportunity. We are back where we started, that the healthy life is a nice balancing of energy against resistance, so that the energy can use the resistance as an instrument to get work done. The stream of life is like a waterfall to be disciplined in dynamos and set to work.

So don't let's talk too much of 'freedom from' or even 'saving sinners'. For everyone of us, life is a job of work, and not an easy one. But it is **not only** convicted criminals who have tried to escape the collar.

## 17: The danger of great men

*Why do great men so often suffer disappointment in their sons? Is it just chance? Or is there something peculiarly difficult about growing up in the shadow of the mighty? Whatever they may be to mankind at large — are great men usually a handicap to their own children?*

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The common expectation that great virtues should be hereditary, too often leads to disappointment and sometimes even to a dramatic precipitation in the opposite direction. I know that I shall lay myself open to a hulla-balloo if I say that the vicar's son can hardly expect to be as good a man as his father. Indeed, I would not expect the vicar himself to admit his disappointment in this matter. But I think the vicar's son might be found to agree with me that, under the awe-inspiring influence of the old man, the course of virtue was sometimes in fact unduly hard to follow.

The virtues of Sir Charles X were not ecclesiastic, but commercial and political. In a worldly sense, he weighed as a great man. He had pursued a career of conspicuous success from the city through politics to a seat in the Cabinet, several Governments ago. His flair for victory had included play as well as work, and he had been

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greatly admired by both men and women—though for different reasons. With a double first at Oxford, he was a cricket blue, and in his middle years he had found time to excel as a racing motorist and to be one of the pioneers of flying. He succeeded at all he embraced, which was partly due to his natural ability, partly to a flair for choosing the right people to do his work for him, and partly to the fact that possessed of much natural charm, he took great pains to please.

Fortunately for him, his wife adored him—as well she might, especially as she was apt to be a little blind to his failings, laying such faults as she rarely might discover always at the door of his excessive virtue. They had two sons, Robert and Jack, upon whom fell the light of their father's brilliance from their earliest days. It was assumed, of course, that such a brilliant father must have brilliant sons. Their father set them no lower standard than his own. They both went to his old school (the best) and to his university (the only one).

Robert inherited at least his father's charm. After showing some early promise of success at his prep. school, he disappeared into the ruck of his public school, only to reappear in the limelight of his university for various misdemeanours due to inebriety. His studies for the Diplomatic Service were abruptly terminated. He refused to enter any of his father's businesses, which he said were much too dull. Thanks to his father's influence, however, he found a position in the film industry where his social connections were sufficiently valuable to outweigh his lack of moral stamina.

Jack did a little better, but made the initial error of marrying beneath him. In his adolescence he had shown some talent for painting, which had been severely snubbed. He must go into his father's business, which he did obedi-

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ently, as the obviously easiest course. Unhappily married, he rose no further in his father's world than to occupy a minor post of privilege in a mood of embittered tyranny.

Why must great men so often suffer disappointment in their sons? Why is exceeding virtue in a father, who has been the respected pillar of his Church, so often a cause of offence and rebellion in his straying children? Why can we not follow where the Master leads? Aside from their value as leaders, is there some subtle danger in great men?

In home and school, in all the arts and in society, we owe the greatest debt to all great men, and women, too. Learning by their example, we learn from them something of that noble stature of humanity which—especially if we work as hard as they have done—may even be discovered latent in ourselves. No, I do not mean that greatness of any kind should be disparaged. Our social landscape needs such snow-capped peaks to encourage the adventuring feet of lesser folk. And yet I do insist that there is a danger in great men, that they may be the cause of needless failure and weakness in their followers. The fault, when fault there is, is rarely theirs. It is either our own, for not seeing how we have exploited the greatness of others for our own too lazily ambitious ends. Or it is the fault of the middle men, the teachers, who have so rubbed in Shakespeare, for example, that they have rubbed out such natural talent as their pupils had. And some parents are so ambitious for their child's success that, setting too high a standard much too soon, they spoil their chance of growing up to their own full measure in the course of time.

If 'personality' means anything at all, it implies a specific difference in each one of us, partly of gift or latent talent for development by work in time, but partly on the other

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hand of limitations also, for there are some things for which we have no aptitude, and certain ways we should not try to go if we are wise. The problem of each one of us, therefore, is to find out who we are and what we have within ourselves, as seed for proper growth in time. Time may be tedious, but it is true: and greatness, if it is to be lasting, needs the greatest time. The trouble with all hero-worship, as with all impatient ambition, whether our own or another's, is that it may slip the leash of time and assume by immediate identification the stature of another, which has not been earned or grown. It is particularly those that have the seed of greatness in them who may fall victims to this urgent pressure of their present inferiority, to find the comfort of another's cloak, which does not really fit them, in which to wrap themselves.

There is a tendency, too, on the part of lesser fry to sacrifice themselves by jumping into the open mouth of the big fish, sharing the monster's belly in a state of security which would not be theirs if they were on their own. Thus Christians may enjoy the comfort of the Church, pupils their schools and colleges, scientists their institutions, and Russian peasants (though impoverished themselves and restricted in every movement of body and mind) the omnipotent magnificence of their monster State.

There is much to be said in favour of this state of monstrous parasitism, because it is so obviously to the advantage of both the monster and the parasite. But it is not what we have meant in this country, in the past at least, by democracy. The distinction, as I see it, is most important, because the essential value of the person, of the individual, as the one worthy of respect, depends upon this issue's being faced without confusion: Is man to be the servant of the State, or the State the servant of the

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man? Is it the privilege of greatness to be served, or is it the responsibility of greatness to be the greater servant of humanity?

The danger of the great ones is the danger of all monsters, that they will eat us up. But I believe strongly that greatness of any kind must learn to mind its own business and let us mind ours. Its job is to feed the hungry, but not to hold them on a string. When Christ said "Feed my lambs", he spoke as a great one recognizing the needs and limitations of all the little ones. *Feed them*—and let them grow. They are *not* for sacrifice upon the altar of another's greatness, however good that other one may be.

Many of us have become bedevilled in various ways, so that our hearts and minds are torn to pieces amidst the confusing claims of countless, equally untimely, tyrannies. The job of the psychologist is to see that all these warring parts may have their proper turn with due respect, but none in tyranny. Then out into the world and find your way, in spite of the resistance you must meet, in spite of mother's anxious fears and father's different opinions.

And so I am disposed to emphasize a side of truth which, if it be only partly true, still needs more attention than it gets: that all great men, leaders, teachers and those in power of any kind; and all great institutions, churches, schools and governments, must learn to practise their own most rigorous self-diminishing, dying down to nothing, in order that those who are dependent upon them may live. To put it in another way: the workers, pupils, children—the 'persons'—must come first.

Much as we have heard of the virtues of unselfishness and sacrifice for the good of others, we are in danger of losing ourselves too soon and for the wrong motives. "Follow your leader and die for the cause!" is all very well for the leader and the cause. But are they worth it?



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If they were, would they place such great demands on simple folk who are only too willing to be exploited?

Life is a business that needs much minding—more than it gets in our modern scientific days. Can we not be more mindful of one another, but not of one another's business? Let that be for each to mind his own. *Mind your own business*. In that brief code is there not the essence of true democracy, of good management in industry, and, indeed, of all good government, whether within the four walls of home or in the larger world? Then we should really get somewhere, and there would be more imaginations like Shakespeare's, more pioneers like Freud, and more who followed the path once trod by Christ, within their daily framework of experience.

## 18: Boy who wouldn't grow up

*Frank was fifteen—and he hadn't lost the physical habits of a baby. Everything was tried. Nothing succeeded. At last his headmaster said: "Leave him alone, there's nothing to be done." However that didn't seem to work either. What should be done about Frank—and other Franks as well?*

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His mother had done her best for him. Ever since it had been a problem, his mother had thought of everything she could. She had gone from one doctor to another; everything had been tried, and everything had failed. Frank's problem was the sordid but not uncommon one of bed-wetting. It was still going on—and Frank was nearly fifteen.

At his different schools—and he had been to several, hoping that one might succeed where another had failed—he had been treated at different times by every means, ranging from extreme severity, through being woken up at all hours of the night, to complete indifference. But nothing had lessened his bed-wetting, which seemed to be possessed of more persistence than anything else in Frank's otherwise unconcentrated life. For Frank it was a curse that followed him unforgettably and spoilt all he did. How could he have any confidence in himself with his bladder

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letting him down so constantly? He was now at his public school and his mother had written to his head master—"Must this go on for ever? Cannot something be done about it?" And his head master had replied: "There is nothing we can do except forget it. All psychiatrists are agreed that attention only makes it worse. We must hope that in course of time, as he grows happier and settles down, he will grow out of it. Meanwhile, I can assure you, there is nothing more that anyone can do." He was a wise and patient man, who knew that most problems solve themselves in time, if you don't 'hit them on the bump'. So that was that; everything had been tried, and nothing could be done. But the question I want to ask is: Isn't there perhaps *something in between* doing all we can and doing nothing?

With our coughs and sneezes, palpitations of the heart, constipation and diarrhoea, it is as if our bodies *talk*. They say "I really can't swallow that!" or "Something's giving me a pain in my neck" or "I haven't got a leg to stand on!" and the doctor calls it gastritis, rheumatism or sciatica. Of course, I do not say that there is always a meaning underlying all our ailments; but certainly sometimes there is an emotional factor, as if we are making a protest, and our bodies are saying what we mean in their own way, as best they can. Certainly, this is often—but not necessarily always—the case with bed-wetting. It is as if a child is crying for its mother with its bladder instead of its eyes, crying for help, for comfort and security, which it was not given in the beginning, long ago.

Briefly, this was Frank's story as he told it to a psychologist. His parents were separated when he was five, and they had arranged to share Frank, so that he spent half his holidays with his father and half with his mother. He

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was an only child. He remembered that his father had always set him against his mother in every way he could, saying that her ideas were 'silly', and encouraging him to disobey her. His mother was, perhaps, a little too insistent on her own ideas of how her husband and her son should behave, and laid down tramlines for their conduct, rigidly based on convention and 'what would the neighbours think'. She wanted everything just right—and did something about it. But her husband was a rip-roaring rebel, who wanted everything to be the opposite—and he also did something about it. So his parents quarrelled, and poor Frank was torn in two. Half of him admired his father's extravagant, unconventional ways, and gladly followed him in disobeying his mother. But the other half, of which he was ashamed, needed to be dependent on his mother's comfort still.

Partly, I think, his bed-wetting was a rebellious protest against his mother's too-urgent insistence on his being 'good' and 'clean'. Partly, it was a protest against his father's strenuous insistence upon his total independence of his mother's moral rule. Certainly, Frank was all confused from his earliest days, between what he needed to do about himself, what his mother wanted him to do about it, and what his father wanted him to do about his mother. Over his head and body his parents argued and quarrelled, pulling his sensitive little being in opposite directions. In such a divided and conflicting world, what could Frank do except divide himself, becoming in part identified with each, yet falling wholly in between the two? Of this split state, his bed-wetting was evidence that more had been said and done by both his parents than he could manage to absorb. But where too much had been done already, he had still to suffer more and more attempts on the part of doctors and school teachers, all anxious to do

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something, or to get him to do something, about his persistent bed-wetting. Certainly he tried to do something about it, as they all tried to do something about it, but it was a vicious circle. Somehow, the more they tried, the worse it was, until his last head master rightly said: "There's nothing to be done. Let's see if we can make him happy. Then, in time. . . ."

But again I ask the question, is our choice only between doing something and doing nothing? Is there nothing in between these two extreme alternatives? Yes, I believe there is. Could not someone say—"Hi, Frank, stop a minute. Look. . . . Listen. . . . You see . . ." and then show him to himself, so that he can see *for himself* the tortured, twisted, habits of his early history? We can never see what happened to us with our own eyes until someone shows us from outside, because we are, as it were, too much inside ourselves, submerged in our own experience, to see it clearly, objectively. But when, shown simply by another, we can say, "Oh, I see!", that simple statement means that a re-orientation has already taken place. Something has changed in our experience and nothing can ever be quite the same again. In spite of the fact that nothing has been done about it, a real change has, in fact, occurred when we can say—"I see!"

It is surprising how willing children are to see. They are profoundly realistic, for seeing comes more naturally when we are young than when we are old and tired from too much trying. Given a fair chance, children will always see the point and leave it at that. It is only as we grow older that we feel we ought to do something more about it. (And then, doing more and more, do we not see less and less?)

There are many Franks, of both sexes and all ages, whose

## Boy who wouldn't grow up

physical symptoms have underlying emotional causes, deep-rooted in their past. I do not claim that these can all be cured by such a simple regarding of their past experience, for human life is extremely complex and many factors are involved. But I do claim that vision is a way of 'doing something about it' that is often very effective in itself. As long as we see with sufficient understanding, something does happen, changes do occur—in time.

It is the habit of all illness either to do too much about it, instinctively trying to dismiss the problem neck and crop (as in the spasms of coughs and sneezes, diarrhoea and colitis, racing heart and muscular tension); or else to do nothing about it, giving it up as a bad job (as in the paralyses and flabby states, like constipation and the sluggish liver.) Instinctively the body behaves as Frank's parents did, determined as they were to get rid of their—and Frank's—problem. But even nature knows another, better, way when it is possible. This is *absorption in time*, which is how the white cells in the blood deal with invaders if they can. This is a middle way between the two extremes of 'dismiss' and 'ignore' which Frank's parents—and all of us—would do well to practise more often than we do.

In this matter, I am afraid our doctors are not always wise. We come to them distressed, restless and anxious to be rid of our offender. It is as if we assume, with their tacit approval, that all illness, pain, and even death itself, *ought* to respond to tactics of dismissal. Or else—hopeless alternative, to be avoided even if it costs the other side of Harley Street!—there is nothing to be done about it.

And yet common sense alone is enough to tell us that this is not so. Illness of any kind, whether curable sooner or later, or not at all, can be a teacher and can improve our character. It is all a matter of our *attitude towards* illness. Pain unsuccessfully rejected becomes magnified to

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torment; but pain accepted willingly becomes automatically reduced to more tolerable suffering. It is not for nothing that the sick one is referred to as the 'patient'; let him be so, learning what he can while he suffers what he must. And words do not betray us when we understand that the 'doctor' is also the 'teacher'; let him be so, too. His task is not only to take the pain away, though bless him if he does! It is also that he should enable us to bear ourselves nobly in our distress, learning, perhaps, meanwhile how not to be quite so foolish when the next temptation comes. Such tactics on our part will help him in his work, and also strengthen the forces of nature on which we all rely for our recovery.

## 19: Who d'you think you are?

*No, every soldier does NOT carry a Marshal's baton in his knapsack. No, we are NOT all fitted for a university career. No, we should NOT all make equally good doctors, given the same training. The task of each is to discover—and realize—his own essential nature. And no one but himself can do it.*

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Wilfred X was grumbling about everything; depressed, confused, he could not concentrate. He had come to the end. He said he was no good: he was a failure and always had been. He was a professional singer, but now no one would employ him. In self-defence, he could only abuse all those more fortunate and more successful than himself. What fools they were! Thus, in defending himself, he had managed to offend all those who might set him on his feet again. The little money that he had, he sometimes spent on drink, in desperation.

I said, "Who do you think you are?" He said, "I am no good. I'm down-and-out, a failure." I said, "Yes, but who are you really? Who would you have been, if you had been yourself, successfully?" He said, "Heaven knows, I've no idea." But this is a little of his story.

Before the 1914-18 war, he had completed his training



### *Who d'you think you are?*

and begun to taste the first fruits of success. He lived and dreamed in a world of music, as his native sphere. His happiness was all in bringing music out and down from that other world of music's origin, through the medium of his voice to please his hearers' ears. But the war came to put an end to all that, and to change his world and mode of life.

He joined up and obtained a commission in the artillery. He served in North Africa and in Gallipoli. He was not a bad officer and took good care of his men. He learnt his job under the discipline of death and made the kind of music which his guns required. But, sensitive to his very soul, he knew the unplumbed depths of fear. He was more afraid of this secret terror of his own than of death itself, or wounds, or anything that his enemy could do to hurt him. He must never show his fear, not even to himself. And so he batted down his emotions, denying even the slightest sign of sensitivity. He flung himself desperately into danger, inviting death. And all went well until the beaches of Gallipoli.

Then one night, waiting to advance at dawn, he found he was trembling in every limb. Was this his cowardice defeating him at last? He pulled himself together in the dawn, advancing with the rest. Wounded slightly in the side, he found his legs were paralysed. He was sent back to base—and finally came home to be discharged as a hopeless case of psychoneurosis. Gradually, with return to civilian life, he recovered the use of his legs again. He was able to obtain a little work as a teacher, but never regained his earlier confidence. Deep in himself, he felt ashamed: a coward, self-condemned and labelled 'neurotic' for all time. He had failed. He had lost his happy touch with music's source. Bitterly he went from one disappointment to another. He refused to teach—such fools

## Who d'you think you are?

they were! His muse had betrayed him and was now only an aching bitterness in the pit of his stomach.

I asked him what he thought would have happened to Beethoven, for instance, if circumstances had put him in the same position? And I asked again, what must happen to any man who not only denies himself, but tries to be someone else, completely different? If Beethoven had been true to himself, he might perhaps still have been a fairly good artillery officer; but if he had killed himself to wear another, lesser, skin, what could you expect but that he would find he had not a leg to stand on?

Who are you? Look at yourself in the mirror. Who is behind that face? Look at your son or daughter, father or mother, mate or boss, what mysterious powers, what past or future story, is concealed behind that familiar form that sometimes says so much, yet more often tells so little?

It is not wise to ask such questions often, for too much introspection leads to misdirected life. But sometimes, even if it is only once in a lifetime, it is wise to press our inquiry deep into the past—Who are you really?—as we confront that image in the mirror, so flatly facing us.

So let us look through the mirror now, down time's long receding tunnel, through the narrow corridor of years and days that holds your history from your beginning. That long sausage-shaped affair, the cut end of which confronts you now, will be prolonged into the future until you die. Past and future—truly you are all that—but you are *more* than that. It is as if the lines converge at our beginning, to extend again, widening indefinitely to include within their span an historic past, which is endless in its vast inclusiveness of the history of all mankind since the world began. There dwells old Adam—and his Eve—within the heart of each of us, contained instinctively within our be-

## Who d'you think you are?

ing, now. Surely it has taken much more time and suffering, immeasurably more than we can imagine, for this man now to have become who and what he is? Yet it will take no time at all for the atom bomb to blow him back again to the unregenerate atoms whence his long journey came!

You and I are made of the same stuff as hills and rivers are. We share the common chemistry of plants and trees. Our instinctive behaviour patterns and physical nervous system do not differ from those of the animals, and the very bones we use are also present in the horse and frog, sparrow and whale. We share a common stock with life in nature, of which we need not be ashamed.

But again, who are *you*? Is that all? No, of course not, for you are *you*, personally. Down through the tunnel, it is as if there goes a continuous line, your line, your self, as the perpetually unique experiencer. There, down that line, mysteriously present, 'I am' always the same one, though differently aged and variously besieged by circumstance. Emerging through time and space, from past to future, here I come! Again, who am I?—and growing from what seed?

Amidst so many miracles of simple fact which are beyond our comprehension, three may stand out now for our attention. First, that I am uniquely different from every other personality. Compare me with others if you must, but please respect the laws and limitations which are laid down as patterns in my seed for my obedience and discipline. Fair hair or dark, blue eyes or brown, short or tall, blest with good looks or not so beautiful, such was the pattern in my seed—to make the best of, which I can never do if you insist that I must change them into something better. (No, every soldier does *not* carry a Marshal's baton in his knapsack. No, we are *not* all fitted for a university career.

## Who d'you think you are?

No, we should *not* all make equally good doctors if we were given the same training. Intelligence is limited at birth by the size and number of certain grey cells in the tissue of the brain. Education can only make the most of what we have. It cannot give us what we have not, nor can it strain us beyond our limits without depriving us of even what we have.) But who I am and what I have is pre-eminently worthy of respect, and what I have in the seed is quite enough *for me*, if you will but give me your encouragement *to be myself*, and not make me try to copy others who have more, or something else which you consider better.

There is a very important *principle of integration* which runs through this whole complex outfit of the self. Somehow, it all adds up to one person, you or me, so that we can get around, working or playing, waking or sleeping, and remain in one piece. Like all principles, this has its disadvantages as well as its advantages. Perhaps the most notable advantage is in our experience of healing. In most cases, if we are not too stupid and persistent in our errors, healing is automatic and we recover in time. (The doctor's job is three-quarters done for him by what he calls the *vis medicatrix naturae*, the healing power of life. The doctor's job is straightening, cleaning-up, sorting-out and tidying-up—and nature does the rest.) One of the disadvantages of the same integrative principle is that we may solidify and systematize too easily and too soon, developing fixed ideas about life and ourselves that are needlessly, yet conveniently, limited. We do not leave enough room for others to be different, and also leave out large portions of ourselves over which we are in constant danger of coming a cropper.

But in spite of all this difference between us, there is something that we all hold in common, which is Life itself.

## Who d'you think you are?

Within our differences, there is one common, universal 'spirit', which we experience as—life.

Self needs circumstance, as seed needs soil for nourishment. Our first experience of 'soil' is in the womb of mother: then the home and the school and the wider world in which we live provide the field in which we must dig and toil for our bread and butter. Out of our circumstance, for better or for worse, we gain our nourishment. The self can never be set apart in isolation: it is completely dependent for its existence upon the field of its relationship. Thus we are the products of both heredity and environment, both of which contribute to the development of self.

One very important question that emerges from all this is: "What of free will?" Are we entirely conditioned by our heredity and circumstance? Is the word 'because' entirely sufficient to explain every human action? Did our born-and-bred singer of the story fail *because* he was forced to become a soldier 'against the grain' of his music? Or is there something *plus* that enables us to exercise free will and so to achieve some freedom of our own deliberate right, *in spite* of our conditioning by heredity and environment? Is it not true that we can—and often do—act, not because, but in spite of, our conditioning? Surely the same slum may be the environment from which springs criminal or lawyer, devil or saint? The same gifts and opportunities may be cast away by one as they are used to the full by another.

This surely depends upon our *attitude to life*. What matters most is not who we are, but *our attitude* to whom we are: not what we are given, but *our attitude* to what we are given. It is not our conditions only, but *our attitude* to our conditions that proves our worth.

What is your opinion? Is your attitude to life capable

*Who d'you think you are?*

in course of time of changing under the free guidance of your choice, or not? Can your free will direct—not your self and its limitations, nor your circumstances when they offend, but at least your attitude to life itself? Is that the meaning of free will?

## 20: How much do children know?

*Is a new-born child an empty space—a kind of cupboard to be filled? Is it a tangle of wicked impulses to be broken down and forced into a shape called goodness? Or is it a mysterious seed to be helped to achieve its true development?*

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“Don’t talk at me!” he said, aged four, to his commanding nurse. His English was not good enough at such an early age to distinguish the shades of different meaning implied by the prepositions ‘at’, ‘to’ and ‘with’, but I knew what he meant—and I think he did, too. We none of us like being talked ‘at’, because it robs us of our self-respect. It implies a breakdown in our proper system of communication, with force applied externally instead. It implies destruction of the bridge between us, and you must come over to my side, or else. . . . With communication interrupted, bridges broken and only force applied from outside, there is bound to be a breakdown sooner or later. But the destruction of children’s bridges of communication by adult voice and hand is only very rarely the work of cruelty, deliberate or otherwise. More often, I am sure, it is a tragedy of good intentions misapplied by those who have grown old too soon.

Children know what they are talking about and at times

## How much do children know?

can express themselves with marvellous accuracy and simplicity. They know the right questions to ask and sometimes even—but is this less important?—the right answers. Here are two remembered conversations to show the reach of a child's mind:

*Susan (aged five):* I love someone at school.

*Parent:* Oh—who is it you love?

*Susan:* I love Femina. I love her—but I don't know if she loves me. (*Pause of silence.*) That's what makes people unhappy when they love someone else—not just loving, but wondering if the other person loves them back.

And in the year of the atom bomb, John, aged four and a half, is in the garden with his father:

*John:* Does all life just end?

*Parent:* Well, some day we all die. After we are dead no one quite knows what happens. Some people think we go on living in a different way.

*John:* Yes, I know about *that*. I don't mean *us*. I mean does all life stop? Does God finish everything off and then there's only a dull mess?

But now let us ask ourselves a question. Do children start with nothing, or are they—from the very beginning—someone unique? Are they like blank sheets on which we must write the truth for them, or are they seeds requiring nourishment and proper soil in which to grow? Are they like sheep to be led, animals to be trained; are they born naughty, to be conditioned into betterness, and disordered, to be bullied into order; or are they all separate souls, differently ordered, experiencing development in time, but each in different time? What do you think? Is a child when it is born only an empty space like a cupboard to be filled? Is it a tangle of wicked impulses to be made good by sternness and discipline? Or is it a mystery



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of power within pattern, life within seed, developing in time through experience of circumstance? As we believe, so we must behave. If our beliefs are confused, so will our behaviour be. What do you believe?

Long ago, I plumped for the seed-in-soil idea of emergence. It has always seemed to me that we could most simply express our human problem, from beginning to end, in a pattern thus  $\bigcirc$ ; or, more actively,  $\oplus$ . There is the seed in the soil, the light in the lantern, the soul in the body, with its problem set of using the power within by developing the means for self-expression, so that good work can be done. Thus each one can make his world out of his means provided and the material given.

The dot in the centre is the all-important point. Small as it is, it is the source of pattern as it is of power. You and I, and every one of us, are each the centre of our own world, caught and confined in it to do what we can with it. The freedom of our will has not the power to choose who, what or where we are, neither as to self nor station in life. But we are free to choose what we will do about it and what we will make out of what is given us.

The reason why I have introduced these somewhat theoretical ideas is in order to supply some background for a statement which might otherwise appear only ridiculous.

I believe, that from the day they are born, *children know everything*. Thereafter, they are learning to realize what they 'know', to prove and use the latent—but of course completely unspecified—'knowledge' with which they are born. That is to say, the condition in which our body starts is one of power within weakness—'all' in next-to-nothing, if you like. The process of growth, therefore, is to develop the means for self-expression, the instruments for using power, to which end the power must be constantly reduced. If the power is not harnessed through the

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instruments by which it experiences opportunity, our seed may become a bomb, bursting out explosively in temper uncontrolled; or, what may be worse for the one concerned, the life force may go into reverse and retrace its path backwards whence it came.

As a general principle in teaching, I would suggest this axiom: *You can only teach me from the background of what I know already.* (This is a completely contrary idea, of course, to that of the 'blank sheet' on which you have to write, for good or ill, with full responsibility.) You can show me what I know already, making my knowledge clear to me; you can relate some part of my knowledge to another; you can show me how to use it; you can proceed by very small steps from the known to the unknown, so that that becomes known also.

The best response from the pupil that the teacher can hope for is: "Oh, I see! You have put into words for me what I knew already, but I did not know that I knew it." Thus knowledge grows as we unfold, extending farther our range of available power to use our instruments for self-expression in the world in which we live.

If we understand this principle of emergence, we shall better understand fear in children, and be wiser in our ways of dealing with it. We cannot, and should not try to, avoid the experience of fear for any child. We can and should try to 'place' it for them, so that they have a 'word' for it. Fear is latent in the child and emerges from within, somewhere between the years of three and five. Children do not learn fear from fairy stories, so it is no use banning 'Grimm', hoping thereby that fear will not arise. On the other hand, the use and purpose of fairy-tales is to give a form and meaning to the fear which must exist and to dramatize it, so that it is no longer lurking formless, the more terrifying because it is on the loose.

## How much do children know?

Here is a story to illustrate what I mean. A little girl of four was waking at night in terror, screaming. She said there was a fox under her bed! She tried to place her terror everywhere, but could not. It was even caused by a cuckoo on a tree: "Stop that cuckoo cuckooing, Daddy!" One Sunday afternoon she brought me a book of Norse fairy-tales and, turning purposefully to a most horrific picture of a man pulling off the arm of a monster and clouting him over the head with the bleeding limb, she said, "Read me that, Daddy!" Of course, I might have thrown the book away as most unsuitable reading for a frightened child, but in fact I did the opposite. In my most dramatic style, I read the story through to its gruesome end, showing her the picture again at the appropriate place. When I had finished, she took the book off my knee and, placing it back securely on the shelf, she said, "Thank you, Daddy. Now I know what I have been afraid of!" Suitably dramatized, her fear had found its place, and all was well. Fear, of that horrid, formless kind, never bothered her again.

Parents often find it hard to believe that children, even when quite small, have any knowledge of sex. How could they, being yet so innocent? Yes, but they are only innocent of *experience*. They have all the latent knowledge without the word, the dramatization, by which its meaning can be made available and used. Children have this innate knowledge *en masse*, undifferentiated, yet loaded with hidden power. It is our job to dramatize for them what they must one day know they know. The important thing is that the word, the drama, when it comes should not come with a sudden shock. For if it does, the inner knowledge will go down, not up—back, not forth—in, not out—into reverse, in fact, to be what we call 'repressed,' where it

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may never be discovered. There are these great blank areas within us all where the original light has been dismayed into the timeless dark, and where terror is the greater because its origin must ever be concealed.

As we grow older, we are increasingly impressed with the urgent demand of the outer world, the binding grip of the conditions in which we have to live. As knowledge grows with experience and schooling, so the reality of our inner world departs. But I would claim that the child's world is more real, not less, than ours, because this inner world, forgotten though it often is, is still supremely powerful. To the child, fairies and witches, princesses, giants and ogres, pirates and hidden stores of gold, are the dramatic forms into which their inner values are projected. They are the outward forms that 'hold' the inner drives, dramatizing them in such a way that imagination can find its outlet, without being utterly cramped by the cold reality of known and measurable things. Thus the battle of the light and dark forces in the soul of man can be expressed through myth and fairy tale, folk lore and nursery rhyme, religious tale and holy sacrament, in which the mysterious forces in us can find their fitting play. This is not *only* fantasy, *only* illusion, to be replaced by a sterner view of our outward, actual reality as soon as possible. It is a needed expression of our inward reality, which, if we lose it in the press of circumstance, will leave us twisted and unbalanced, with more importance given to the lantern than the light. By itself, the world of science is a grey and dismal thing, without morality or value, without drama or poetry. Surely, it is much less large than life, though it may be life's destroyer?

I am not denying, of course, the importance of the real external world. All I claim is that the human problem is not an easy one, because it is founded exactly in the re-

## *How much do children know?*

relationship and communication between these two worlds, both of which are real, of light and lantern, I and me, energy and harness, child and adult man. Our problem is, without destroying either, to relate them with due respect, without disparagement—for neither is inferior in value, and neither world is any better than the other. Our values, like our manners and our morals too, are all determined by the quality of communication which exists between these two opposing systems of our inner and our outer worlds. This is the truth, the poetry, the drama and the purpose of our experience. And this is self-expression.

Without exception or qualification, without hesitation or fear of contradiction, I certainly regard communication as the most important function of any human being. Communication is more than the right use of words: it is the effective transmission of meaning. If my first axiom is true, that children know everything from the beginning, but have to acquire the means of expressing what they know, then it follows that meaning is there first, but the word for it only comes after, with experience. Meanings are primary, words secondary; that is to say, meanings are value, but words are measurement. The purpose of all communication is to convey the meaning, and words must be used with care and understanding of their secondary nature if they are not to hold meaning prisoner, perhaps even utterly destroying it. Children have meaning still in what they say, but adults, having many more words, may have lost most of their meaning. (How few adults can really talk to children without talking down to them!) The art of all good communication, and the essence of good manners, is to speak in the language of the other when it is not our own. But we shall never discover what the other means if we assume too simply that we understand.

## 21: A stiff upper lip is a menace

*Mrs. F kept a stiff upper lip. Even when there was a car-smash and a body was flung down at her feet. She simply stepped over the body and walked home. You couldn't have a much stiffer lip than that. . . . but did it really help her—or anybody else?*

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Mrs. F prided herself on her self-control. When she was a child, she said, people just were not ill in her family; they were not allowed to be. In her childhood there had never been any 'fuss' and no show of affection, either. If she remembered her mother kissing her at all, it was only a rare cold 'peck'. Whatever happened, you were always expected to 'push on regardless'. In fact, the only thing that mattered was efficiency; it was a case of 'get on or get out'—and be quick about it. Her parents had chosen a school for her which was modelled on the traditions of the best public schools for boys. There was no nonsense about it. The discipline was strict, you played games, passed exams and did as you were told, for the greater glory of the school.

With such consistent training never to show her feelings, her upper lip became stiffer and stiffer. Dutifully but without emotion, she married, very suitably, a successful chartered accountant, whose house she kept in perfect order.

### *A stiff upper lip is a menace*

She had no children because she did not want any. During the war, her house was bombed, and throughout that crisis and all the dangers of those anxious years, she behaved with the most admirable self-control. She never lost her head or showed a sign of fear. Stiff-lipped, with everything ordered in her life exactly as she thought it ought to be, she carried on until, a year after the war was over, her husband fell ill. The doctors were not sure exactly what the trouble was: but alas! she knew. With no evidence other than that provided by her own fears, she was *absolutely certain* that it was infantile paralysis. Her husband recovered, but her fears did not. She was obsessed by her fear of this one illness, which was never out of her mind. She, who had always controlled everything and never shown her feelings to the world, was now the constant miserable victim of this unreasonable fear. The harder she tried to force her feelings to obey the orders of her old dictatorship, the more unruly they became.

I pointed out to her that self-control could sometimes go too far, and instanced the case of a woman witnessing a motor-car accident, who promptly fainted. That was her way of self-control, I said. It was effective up to a point, but had obvious disadvantages. "But I am not a bit like that," she said. "Some years ago when I was walking home I saw there was going to be an accident. A man was shot through the air out of the back of a touring car and fell right at my feet, not a yard away. I just walked on, stepping over him where he lay and went straight home. I never even mentioned it to anyone." I asked whether anyone was there to look after the injured man. "No, I don't think so," she said, "but there was a doctor's house nearby. I remember seeing one of the drivers running towards his house." I thought that was a museum-piece of self-control. But her feelings got her in the end, you see.

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Of course, self-control is a good thing. Living together is hard enough in any case, and somehow we must preserve a certain discipline, a unity of purpose and pattern, or else all goes 'hay-wire'. It is the same for society as for the individual. Where there are many parts engaged to make a whole, there must be some controlling principle to hold them all together.

But how? First it is necessary to establish the difference between people and things. Things are comparatively easy to keep in order, because it is possible to control exactly every aspect of their parts and relationships. Nowadays, we are very clever indeed with our power over things, and perhaps we shall soon be able to go to the moon for tea, with everything under control. But life itself is as unpredictable as ever. If even the greatest of our scientists kicks his cat, not all his knowledge can predict its fall. Wherever there is life there is this factor of uncertainty. Although possessed of less predictability than any cat, Mrs. F had treated life, experience, herself and others, as if she could know and fix their every move with certainty. Up to a point she did, successfully. But once she was confronted by what she could not control, Mrs. F was finished.

Of course, Mrs. F is an extreme case, but she is probably familiar to us all in greater or less degree. None of us *likes* uncertainty: we all prefer to know where we are and to have our lives as fixedly secure as possible. Resisting life's habit of flux and change, we fix it as we can. And growth being tediously slow, we hurry it along, preferring the undoubted good to the much more doubtful true. Thus the morality of tyranny is joined with the impatience of anxiety in a false marriage between instinct and ethics, impulse and conscience, to achieve a 'goodness' which is not true because it has never grown, and to plan a Utopia for which no one is ready.



## A stiff upper lip is a menace

Wherever dreams may come from, they are certainly not within our mind's control, but they have something to say about those who try to fix themselves in high places, ignoring time and truth for impatient goodness' sake. Here are a few 'cartoons' drawn for us by the dreams of a girl who was too good to be true:

*I was walking on very thin ice. It had split very deep. How can thin ice split deep? And yet if we try to keep only on the surface of experience, never risking getting our feet wet, never taking the plunge, never giving way, is it not true that we are in danger of splitting very deep, as we split off from the depth of life, and from the depth within ourselves?*

*I had climbed up a long rickety ladder to some attics. It was not safe. Should I ever be able to get down? I looked and saw the animals were coming up, too. Up we go to the top story, to wander in the labyrinthine rooms of mind. All very educational and praiseworthy, but don't we lose touch with the ground? And what happens if the animals (instinctive impulses of grab and flight) invade that higher territory, perhaps to gain control?*

*I was being shown a great machine by my aunt. It was an enormous mechanical ash-distributor, connected to the electric mains. My aunt, presumably, is the virtuous one! But to what does all this restless virtue lead, if the creative springs of life are not mechanical, nor virtuous, nor reasonable either?*

*There was a rat in the top of a tree, kept there by a boy. I had to eat a live monkey—it was horrible. Rats are destroyers of the seed, that gnaw, gnaw, gnaw. They are the opposite in all respects to roots, as boys are opposed to the guardian, conservative, feminine principle. Are we not 'animal' inside, and, if the monkey gets out (but hasn't it?) is it not our painful need to put it back again?*

## A stiff upper lip is a menace

One more dream is most revealing of our deepest tragedy: *In the dark neglected basement of a house, I came upon the body of a bull, cut in pieces, bleeding—but it was still alive.* The bull, even in these days, is a fine, impressive creature. In olden days, when there was more magic in our myths, he stood for life as creative power incarnate in the very flesh. But now he, too, is crucified!

Dreams are ticklish evidence on which to base deductions. We can't rely on dreams! Yet these few dreams are facts, evidence indeed, revealed in sleep. Their power to move us is that of poetry, wherein meaning is alive for those whose imagination is still true enough to life to read and marvel whence such meanings spring.

More often than we realize, our vaunted reason and too-trusted conscience are but the captured slaves of our old Adam's instincts of fight and flight. Repressed and reversed as they may be for our convenience, they retain the same old purpose still, of getting our own way, of being superior, and of getting rid of all our painful problems by dismissing them, with peace fixed finally—at any price—and praise for being good thrown in for good measure. And so, with all our progress, our problems still confront us, as large—or larger—than ever.

If self-control by self-dictatorship is thus ultimately a false ideal, asserting as it does too much responsibility for what can only be a part of the whole self; and if the lack of it also can only lead to disaster, then we must think again to find some better means of balancing our errant partial powers in such a way as to fit them within the collar of the whole. Common sense and all experience agree that what we all need is *discipline*, and here surely is the word that touches the heart of the matter of true self-control, as long as the word discipline is not divorced from

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freedom, but seen as being reciprocal with it, the other side of the same penny.

In recent years, there has been much talk of freedom. but as freedom has advanced so discipline has declined. Old Adam now, in his usual wholesale, upstart way, claims not only freedom from fear and want, but also freedom from the whole irksome discipline of suffering.

But life is as it is, and that is not always well. And you and I are as we are, and that is not always good. Our freedom, surely, is to accept the discipline of our experience, willingly; to work within the collar of the present task, doing the job as it comes as well as we can; and to accept the problem with which 'the other' always must confront us, as indivisible from us as our own shadow.

## 22: How to stop smoking

*What is our will, and how is will-power exercised? Is it a stick with which we flog ourselves along—to do the things we dislike and give up whatever we enjoy? Effort itself is not a virtue. The highest exercise of the will is effortless and final.*

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Every year, in the United Kingdom, millions of pounds go up in smoke, providing the Government with millions in indirect taxation, the tobacco growers with a handsome living, and the shareholders with a generous dividend. Quite literally, you and I who smoke our fags and so keep this vast industry (and the Government) in prosperity are the 'suckers'. What do we get out of it? Why do we smoke? Why do we stick those little paper cylinders—or pipes—into our mouths and suck so constantly? No Government would dare to stop us, however severe became the dollar crisis. 'No smoking' is bad enough for an hour, if we are compelled to do without. But a general prohibition is unthinkable, because there are too many vested interests engaged in encouraging our pet vice. And yet, each one of us could stop to-morrow if we willed. What should we gain? A pound or so a week, and better health? What should we lose? Is not the answer nothing?

Why smoke? If I were to choose the simplest answer, I

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would say to fill a gap on many different levels, not only physical. Obviously, sucking is a primary pleasure present not only in the infant mouth. Wherever there is an empty space, it seems there is a need to fill it, so that the comfort of fullness may take the place of the discomfort and anxiety which we associate with emptiness. The greater emptiness leads, therefore, to a greater craving for something with which to fill the aching void, and cigarettes and pipes give us a sense of fulfilment and well-being, when life is empty, anxious, barren or frustrating, as it so often is. Next in importance, I believe, is the fact that nicotine provides a sedative to restlessness. It is an alternative to action that seems to quell the restless energies of body and mind, bringing them more readily within the harness of the job to be done. Smoking not only fills gaps, it bridges them when they are awkward, as they often are in the nervousness of human company. But, finally, I would add to this analysis of the reasons why we smoke that this is an appetite which must increase by feeding it. The more we smoke the more we want, or feed the need, to smoke. Nicotine soothes the nerves, so we crave for nicotine. Withdrawal sets up intolerable restlessness and nervousness, which only more nicotine will stop and so we smoke again. A vicious circle is set up which is excellent for the rising sales of the tobacco companies and the Government's revenue, but bad for our pockets, yours and mine, and also, in the long run, for our health.

But quite apart from our pockets and our health, I think some of us sometimes feel that it is a bit humiliating to be so utterly enslaved by this fragrant weed that we are dragged willy-nilly, like the tin can on the dog's tail, by the irresistible attraction of cigarette or pipe, to smoke, and smoke again. (Now, as I write, I pause—to smoke again!)

However, I can stop smoking when I will and have

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often done so, sometimes even without my wife's noticing the difference in my behaviour during the first week when I am 'knocking off'. (May I remind you that, great as was your own suffering when you tried to do the same, it was nothing to what your nervous restlessness and irritability caused amongst your intimates. That week was Hell all round, and perhaps your wife said, as mine has done: "For goodness' sake start smoking again, you are unbearable!" To which I replied: "Oh, but now I see things plainly, as they really are, instead of vaguely through a cloud of smoke." But then, being younger at this little task, I accepted her advice and, smoking again, I felt—and was—a 'better man, at least to live with.)

Why stop smoking? To save money, to improve health, or as an act of discipline. But how reduce the plague of that first week, not only for our fuming selves but for our distraught friends and families? And also, how and when to start?

I must confess I have no advice for those who plan to reduce, by five or ten a day, the quantity they smoke, from more to less. The trouble about such a work of discipline is that it introduces a recurrent act of choice—shall I smoke one now or not?—as the fingers slip unconsciously to the waistcoat pocket, seeking suggestively—not once nor twice, nor ten, but a hundred or a thousand times a day. The whole being becomes preoccupied with the question of smoking or not smoking, and of course, not smoking suggests smoking every time. No, that is too much like hard work for me.

So let's stop smoking altogether. This method is completely effortless and it depends simply and solely on an act of will, a decision, final and complete: "*I have stopped smoking.*" It must be like snapping off a light by turning a switch. There, it is done. That is that, finished.

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But first, I advocate a period of preparation, of getting ready for the moment when, quite suddenly and irrevocably, the switch will turn and the decision be taken. "I am going to stop smoking one day soon, but I don't know when." So the mind and will are prepared for a week or so and are not going to be taken by surprise. Repeat your warning to yourself, but keep it always effortless. "I will stop smoking soon"—the word 'will' in this sentence implying only the future tense of the verb 'stop'. Then, snap—the moment comes, the decision is made and the switch is turned. "I have stopped smoking." It is a fact, irrevocable, and there is not the slightest effort—or virtue even—called for on your part.

The thing is done and your will has operated *once and for all* in your decision, so do not let your mind, heart or body play you any tricks. Your will is master now, and you must face your week of known and expected, but by this method minimal, discomfiture. You cannot avoid that entirely, so expect and accept it, for you are being paid a pound a week or more for it and it is worth it. Accept the fact also that for this week your world may seem a rather dismal place, in which things happen simply to distress you, with all determined to do what most annoys. Don't get roused; practise acceptance and leave your empty spaces as they are, to fill themselves. Within a week, or fortnight at the most, you will have settled down comfortably to enjoy your smokeless days and when offered a cigarette your reply will come quite naturally, as if it had always been so—"No, thank you, I am not smoking." But remember this, which is the essence of the whole technique: *it must be effortless.*

What is this will of ours? Where does it come from? What is it made of? How does it operate? Like most words of four letters in common use, the word 'will' has

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many meanings. It may mean simply *desire*, so that *I will* is equated with *I want*. Then it is impulsive energy directed at obtaining what you want. This leads frequently to obstinacy, self-will and silliness. Its awkward and undisciplined twin is '*I won't*', and most of our so-called will-power is really 'won't-power'. 'I won't fail' or 'I won't let this get me down', 'I won't give in' or 'I won't smoke', all imply negative effort, tension of body and of mind, and are activated, of course, by the impulse of desire. However high in the sky the star of our desire may be, desire in itself never springs from a level higher than your lower self and it remains a doubtful product of your selfishness. (So, having stopped smoking, beware of self-righteousness. Better than that, fall back and smoke again.)

Will or won't, derived from desire, require effort and belong, below the belt as it were, to our lower nature. But there is another kind of will which is different because it is effortless and not derived from desire. In fact, it may be, and often is, quite contrary to desire and the impulses (defensive, aggressive and possessive) of our lower instinctive nature. It is this 'will' which operates when we choose a long-term policy instead of a short-term pleasure, or dash into a burning house at risk of our own lives. It involves a decision, a choice, and may be defined as *choice in regard to action*. It is not motivated by the energy of desire but, arising outside desire in the higher realms of consciousness, it canalizes or directs our lower energy where it should go and keeps it there *in spite* of all impulses to the contrary.

I do not want to seem to decry all effort, of course; but only to suggest that some of it, at least, is not only needless, but harmful. Effort itself is not a virtue: some of us are much too trying. Beauty and efficiency, in work or play, are effortless. Watch the expert at anything, whether



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it be art or athletics, business or entertainment, work or play. How easy they make it look, how effortless they seem! The swiftest in the race waste least energy in useless tension, and furrowed brows are more indicative of tired, resistant minds than of free-flowing and creative thought. Too much effort provokes its own opposed resistance, as if the harder we press on the accelerator, the harder in fact we jam on the brakes. And then is it not doubly annoying to see our rival slipping past us, apparently effortless, running free?

All this exhortation to 'put our shoulders to the wheel' and 'try, try, try again' which we used to hear in school and nursery (and nowadays, sometimes, from higher Government levels?) can be carried much too far, as it soon leads to tension, exhaustion and collapse. For peace of mind, as well as beauty and efficiency, we need some time in which to breathe. Our vital energy is like a horse. It needs a rider to exercise his will upon the beast who provides the energy and does the work, while the higher man jogs easily along, his mind made up on where he wants to go. Thus we can make our choice and come to our decision on the higher level of the will, using the energy which is available, but without applying force. Why keep a dog and bark yourself?

For many reasons of health, beauty and efficiency, therefore, it is important to recognize the merit of this 'power of choice in regard to action' which we call the *will*. Besides, unless we can discover how to use it properly, we shall be ruled by our lower appetites and impulses, to lead a 'cat-and-dog' sort of existence, however prettily our motives may be moralized. Civilization and the joys of home life both depend upon our development of this pure faculty of decision, of higher will, of 'choice in regard to action', regardless of the dictatorship of our more 'natural'

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inclinations. Or else we descend into the jungle whence we came, with scientific atom-bombs and all.

So perhaps our experiment in not smoking is worthy of attention. After all, we can always start to smoke again whenever we want to do so. But meanwhile we shall have proved for once who can be master in our lives.

## 23: When to let go

*She was energetic until she collapsed. She was ambitious until she was disappointed. She adored people until she hated them. To herself, she was a misery. To others, she was a nuisance. To all, she was a problem. . . . She didn't know when to let go.*

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Mrs. X was a grandmother of the old school. She had been well brought up to be unselfish, not to show her feelings and to keep the flag flying during adversity. She was gracious and willing—indeed, all too willing—to be imposed upon. During the war she had done her share of A.R.P., and then, when evacuated against her will, she had cooked and kept house for several grandchildren and other small evacuees, which she had never been trained to do. Whatever came, she carried on, not only bearing her own burdens but those of her children, and indeed of anyone who claimed her aid. When her son was killed, she forgot her own sorrows in comforting her daughter-in-law and looking after the children. When her husband was ill she seemed tireless, nursing him day and night. But when the war was over and she might have found some peace, she was struck another blow. One of her daughters, married to the head master of a preparatory school, died after a short illness. It seemed only natural that Granny

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should step in as housekeeper to take her daughter's place, and so she did, to find that this time she had undertaken more than she could do. There are limits to the load that even willingness can carry. Food was difficult, staff was impossible, her son-in-law was irritable and she felt a failure. Reaction from the long strain of recent years set in and she fell an unwilling victim to the sleeplessness of morbid anxiety and depression. It seemed most unfair that her unselfish virtues had brought her to this sorry state, but so it was. She had exceeded her credit at the Bank of Life and now she must, in healing time and patient suffering, redeem her overdraft.

The art of living is in knowing what, and when, to surrender, and it is sometimes very difficult to know when willingness should say 'No', when endurance has had enough, and when determination should let go and say 'I give it up'. Perhaps there is no simple answer, because there seems to be an essential principle in life that is contradictory, conflicting within itself, or paradoxical. Life comes and goes, breathing in and out as it were—and often we do not know whether we are coming or going, as we split in doubt between opposing choices. If we are moving in one direction, should we not be going in the other? This conflict hits us hardest, I think, in those efforts which we make by will-power to achieve our goal, to hold on to our principles and to fight for what we believe to be the best. Obviously, there is great virtue in such persistent effort carried almost past endurance. But when should we let go? Is there not also sometimes even greater virtue in surrender, not with the negative mood of resignation (I don't care, it doesn't matter), but with the positive passivity of acceptance, suffering the needed pain as we let go what we wanted so much to keep? Of all life's problems, it is often most difficult to decide, when things go wrong,

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whether something should be done about it, or whether this is an occasion to let go.

I am thinking particularly of innumerable patients, more or less like Mrs. X, who come to the doctor restless and intense, as full of the evidence of conflict as a corpse-strewn battleground. There is more activity and excitement going on in them than during the height of a Cup-tie final, but it is of less avail. No one is getting anywhere, no one can win, and yet the fight goes on, robbing the victim of sleep and upsetting everybody's peace of mind. "You only need to pull yourself together. You must fight your nerves!" their friends have said. "I've tried until I'm exhausted, but I only get worse," the patient says. "Well," says the doctor, "don't try any more. Relax a bit and get some rest. Just let yourself go and tell me all about it." The doctor, listening if he is wise, does not take sides. Strange as it may seem, he does not even try to make the patient better, for he knows that stronger powers than his will see to that, when they can get the chance. Meanwhile, all that such patients need is rest, if they can get it. But will they relax, letting themselves go? Or will they persist in their determined assault upon the goal of their desire, which is usually doubly reinforced by a desire to escape from what they fear? We know that rest is what they need. But will they rest? That is the problem.

Stella P, in her late fifties, was a bit of a trial in the nursing home where she was under treatment. The nurses found her incorrigibly spoilt, always determined to have her own way. She had to have her nose in everybody's business but her own. She must know everything that was going on and why. And, of course, she was as full of complaints as she could be, for nothing was ever right. She lived in terror and anxiety, complaints and tears.

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Stella P, although she did not realize it, was still living fifty years and more ago, trying to fill the gap her mother had left empty, though through no fault of hers. Her father had been a chronic invalid, who needed much of his wife's time and attention. There was a brother only eighteen months younger who came after the elder girls, and I expect the mother did give him a bit of extra love, making Stella jealous. To make her position still more precarious, her two elder sisters were more attractive than she was, for Stella had been always only 'plain'. And finally, there was a tribe of maiden aunts, her mother's sisters, who took over responsibility for the children, so that her mother could devote more time to her sick husband. So infant Stella had no mother in her childhood, and no father either, but several maiden aunts, each with exact but different ideas of how little children should behave. Sadly disappointed in Stella, they did their utmost to correct her. Stella, resentful and jealous both of her elder sisters and of her younger brother, remained incorrigible. Before the days of greater understanding, she was a problem child, who felt unloved, unhappy and over-criticized. Blindly defending herself in her distress, she only made things worse, which is a disaster that often happens under blind nature's guidance.

Such a beginning lays down a pattern of behaviour that must rule the remainder of her life. Stella was given to 'attachments'. It was as if she went through life perpetually hooked to someone or to something, either a person whom she adored, an ideal to which she surrendered so wholeheartedly that she always suffered disappointment, or to a picture of herself which, though desirable, was never true. She had no sense of time, so nothing grew. Whatever she wanted or admired, she was bound to have, or be, it now. She was energetic until she collapsed. She was am-

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bitious until she was disappointed, which was always, and then she was hopeless. She adored people until she hated them, because they let her down. To herself, she was a misery. To others, she was a nuisance. To all, she was a problem.

But what was Stella's problem, really? I think it can be put most simply in this way: it was as if she had become her own father and mother, who were rolled up tightly into a ball inside her 'self'. You see, feeling that she had no father and mother in the steady experience of unconscious relationship in her childhood, she also felt that she *must have* them. The gap must be filled, therefore what she wanted most must be assumed. Instead of real relationship, experienced in time and freedom with proper space between, with mother, father and child set out like the three corners of a triangle, Stella became fixed in a state of tension and ceaseless activity that was always trying to force her world to fit herself, or herself to fit her world. It was as if she could be neither child (to play), nor woman (to enjoy passivity), nor man (to exercise a proper choice and see it through, if possible, in time). No, she must be all three rolled into one and 'hooked' to what she wanted, now, immediately. Thus there could be no peace for her or anyone, for nothing could be left as it was and no one was free to be themselves. Stella's 'pattern', though unknown to Stella, must rule her life and so rule others, too. She never could let go, or give it up. She ruled, by sickness, those she could not rule in health.

Yes, Stella was a problem. How to set her mind at rest? How to set her, and those around her, free from this painful tyranny? Obviously, it was impossible for her to have what she wanted. How, then, to give her what she needed?

I would divide this operation into three stages, all of

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which require a process of learning by experience in time, which is what we really mean by 'understanding'.

(1) "*What is biting you, Stella?* Tell me exactly what is the matter." This inquiry is strictly scientific, impartial and objective. It aims not only at finding out all the relevant facts of Stella's past experience, but also at showing them to Stella, so that she can accept them. "Oh, I see. But what is the use of that?" says Stella. "It doesn't alter anything!" "No, indeed, it does not," you say, "but that is just the point. Before, you've always tried to alter everything you did not like. Hence these tears. Now, face the facts and let them be. Obviously you can't alter them, then, now or ever. So let it rest at that." Such acceptance with understanding requires much attention, time and discipline, all of which Stella needs.

(2) *Live and let live* is as good an axiom as any for those engaged in problems of relationship. If life is like breath which comes and goes, so—sometimes more blest in going than in coming—are our relatives. Let them come, let them go; the operative word is 'let', or we become too 'trying', which always sets up tension with our relatives. Although she may not realize it, Stella in fact is Stella's nearest relative, for no one else can set us the acutely painful problems which we set ourselves. So, see yourself as you are, Stella, and get acquainted with yourself—or selves, if you find several. Get related—but don't try to interfere. You can't just muck about with facts, you know! What's true is true; it is rooted rock-like in its own anatomy. So let it rest; and resting in your understanding, Stella, be at rest.

(3) *Let yourself go*. Stella, say to yourself: "I give it up"—but find out what that little sentence means, in each of its four words. 'I' means *you*, Stella, but in a rather special total but essential sense, as the principal party to all your



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problems. 'Give' means *surrender*, space, time, sitting back and letting go, with understanding of what you lose—or gain—by doing so. 'It' is—what? Your best beloved, anything you have 'hooked-on' to yourself: perhaps it is a picture imagined of yourself or someone else, which, if it is not true, you don't lose much by losing. Well, whatever it is, real or false, desired or feared, yourself or someone else, now let it go, and breathe again. 'Up' is the last word in the sentence, and important, too. If it goes up, then you go down, Stella. So go on, down you go, falling, falling, off to sleep, Stella, into the restful darkness of that deep unknown, from which we draw so much of what we need.

Thus emptied, you will be filled again; with all surrendered, more will be returned to you. By this death is life renewed, for here, in seeming nothing, there is all.

## 24: Love, sex and possession

*All ideas of possessing another in the name of love are wrong. People are not property, especially in love. True love seeks to set its object free, to let him or her go — not to hang on, as we say, like grim death.*

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I wonder if you enjoy using words as much as I do? I think they are terrific and, in using such an emotionally dramatic word, I am not saying any more than I mean. Words are alive, unless we kill them. Words are like seeds; they are pregnant with life, unless we turn them into contraceptives. And words are terrifying because their latent powers can be so easily misused, misunderstood, or simply —missed. Take love, for instance. What a word! There are nine letters in the three words, God is Love. They may mean nothing to you: or they may mean comfort, security and peace. But if we really knew the power concealed in those words 'God' and 'Love', so simply equated through the bridge-word 'is', then I would hazard a guess that it was greater than the energy contained in all the atom-bombs that restless and inventive man could ever make.

Such compressed meaning as these words contain is, perhaps, best left unravelled, because we shall never clearly understand such statements of infinity, however

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hard we try. But the trouble is that so many do, in fact, misunderstand, while claiming to understand; and so many more say there is nothing to understand, because neither God nor Love can have any existence or meaning in a scientific world. With the latter I would agree, of course, for you cannot catch Niagara in a teaspoon or a sunrise on a mirror. But teaspoons and mirrors are very useful things when used for their proper purpose. And so is Science. But also, so is Love!

Science has its own language. So has love—and God. But we must not mix our meanings or we shall only make a muddle. Language, when it is properly used, is not like a salad. I mean, you wouldn't put words like 'quantum theory', 'darling' and 'the Holy Spirit' in the same sentence, any more than you would string together bits of Greek, Arabic and French, expecting to make sense.

But there are always words to come to our rescue, if only we use the right ones. 'God is a spirit.' What does that word 'spirit' mean? That question is not easy to answer, but it invites us to consider side by side its opposite or contrasting word 'matter'. The meaning of matter is much easier to define: matter is what occupies space for a time in lumps. Spirit, by contrast, is like air. It is a kind of universal emptiness present everywhere. But, to say that spirit is what is 'not matter' is not to say that it does not matter! Obviously, from the material standpoint, spirit must seem to be extremely negative. Yet there is the word, completely positive, for an all-pervading essence, always, everywhere. Scientists don't need the word at all. It isn't on their plate. But there the word is, nevertheless, for those who find it useful *in its proper place*.

I want to use it now, to explain something about a certain kind of love which is not entirely a figment of the imagination. I would call it 'love without any hooks on

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it'. Imagine two clouds meeting, passing through one another, touching each other at every point, and then withdrawing and passing away. There was no resistance on either side, no interference and no attachment; no hesitation, and no haste. They met, were joined without loss of identity, and were parted. If God is Love, and God is a spirit, then here is a way of catching some idea of what that means, in a teaspoon, or on a mirror. God's love is spiritual love, and sometimes even human love, too, is like that—without interference, hooks or haste, just breathing its way through us all the time, even if we do not notice it and never know that it is there.

Well, that suits me. I like the idea. But it is very different, isn't it, from some of the things you and I have been told about His Heavenly interfering habits? Perhaps they were invented by those whose habits were aggressively similar to the ones they imposed upon their deity?

Yes, I have met that positive, constant feeling of comfort and encouragement from some very ordinary people and it is a great joy when we experience it. Such love touches what it does not grasp. It has no axe to grind and does not interfere. It has no hooks on it, and so causes no resistance in the one who is loved. But, of course, it is very liable to be exploited—or ignored.

To understand the more earthly ways of love, it is necessary to know where the hooks come from that are such a common characteristic of our usual way of loving one another. We are not a bit like clouds in our embrace! Our bodies are resistant lumps of matter, that do not blend in union, but must resist and grasp, holding and fixing, jointly, if they can. It is as if our very bodies have caught the spirit in their material folds, like Niagara in a teaspoon, and so turned one kind of love, which had no hooks, into another which is full of them.

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The spirit is incarnate and the 'word' made flesh, in you and me. Then the primary love is split in two and the parts opposed in what we know as sex, which is a very hooky and resistant business, unless it can re-experience some of that supreme quality which was inherent in its origin.

The word sex suggests, although we cannot be sure that this is its proper derivation, a cutting off of one part from another, or of the part from the whole, as in the word 'section' (Latin *secare*, to cut). Perhaps it is only a pun, a similarity of sound, but certainly the idea is full of meaning; that we, in our bodies and separate personalities, are not only cut off from our Heavenly source but also from one another, male from female, each from all. Hence the problems of relationship, the anxiety of separation and loneliness, and the immense range and difficulty of earthly love, which feels it must regain unity with the beloved, here and now, for all eternity. Sex touches Heaven, because Heaven plays its part in it. But sex has its poles apart and asunder perpetually at war, fighting for fuller life, with very earthly hooks that hold and hurt with ponderous affection. Sex says, in effect, to its beloved: "You are mine!" and claims the right of property possessed. The difficulty then is obvious enough, for if she claims him as hers and he claims her as his, and both claim the children as their own who, in their turn, each regard their parents as their private property; with all this in the name of love, where are we, and who is in the right? A pretty pickle will ensue as, indeed, it all too often does. Then, how to solve the muddle?

In principle, at least, the problem is not so difficult to solve, although, in practice, it is hard enough as earthly hooks are never straightened out so easily. The first statement to consider is that all ideas of possessing another per-

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son in the name of love are radically wrong. In fact, people are not property, especially in love. The beloved is never to be regarded as an object of possession and all our hooks with which we hold one another, so painfully at times, need to be straightened on the anvil of experience in love's good time.

But we must go further than that, or we shall still be caught on the deepest hook of all, which is an error of personal egotism, an oversimplified mistake in regarding ourselves as property for our own ownership. No, even my self is not my own, to do as I like with it. Even that deepest hook of all must go, to be bent straight by letting that first—and last—beloved go. 'Let your self go!' may sound like commonplace advice, but it gets at the very roots of knowing how to live. While that hook is still there to hang on to, self-love will be spent in a fearful confusion of tension and anxiety.

If you ask me why it should be so, I would refer you first to the empirical proof of your own experience. And then I would ask you to consider the inevitable logic of the principle which I have put before you in the words that I have chosen to use in this article. I could not make sense of what I wanted to write about human love unless I started with 'God is Love', and mentioned that indefinable spiritual quality of love which is, for all of us, part of our actual experience, though often ignored. Embodied and split in two as we are, we find in our own personalities that there is both conflict and a unifying principle, which are three aspects of the original 'causal' principle. Our earthly parts are fitted with their appropriate hooks, but the hookless principle of another kind of love is in us, too.

The tendency with all anxiety and restlessness is to find bigger and better hooks, which some of us then use as a means of hanging on to God as Heavenly Father, hoping

### *Love, sex and possession*

that He, in His turn, will also hang on to us. But what I am suggesting is that, in fact, He does no such thing. Is He not, perhaps, the very essence of all hooklessness? If that is so, when we can learn to straighten out all our hooks, letting ourselves go in good faith, trusting in Him, we shall find the only effective solution to all our pressing problems of personal relationship. In actual fact, we may find that love only makes sense when we realize that we are all His property.





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